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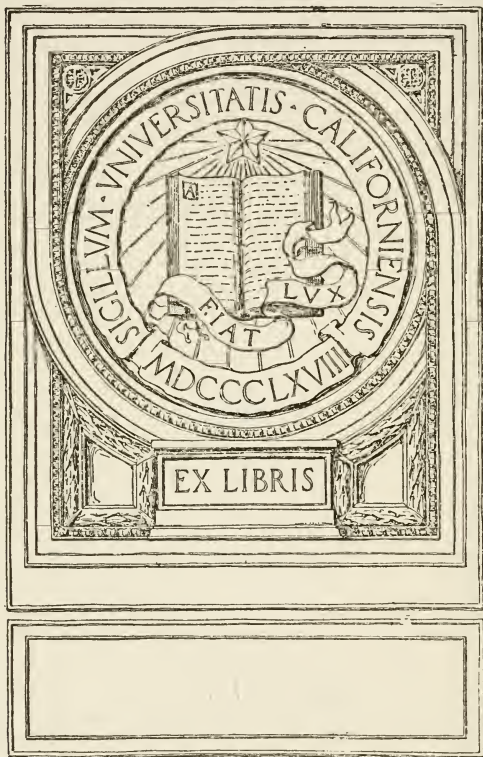
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The Highway

A Matter of Fact
Examination of
the Greatest
Event in
History



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The Highway

A Matter of Fact Examination of the Greatest Event in History



The Promise

“A Highway shall be there and a WAY”

Isaiah, xxxv, 8

The Fulfilment

“Jesus said, I am the WAY”

John, xiv, 6



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PREFACE.

"What will *this* babbler say?" was asked when Paul the Apostle came to the Athenians bringing them the "good news" of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ! Perhaps the same question will be asked when one presumes, at this late day, to add another word on a subject, nearly 2000 years old, which men generally consider as having been settled long centuries ago. Should it be asked, a few words will answer it.

"*That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*" is not only "*a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance*" but one that has been very generally accepted; nevertheless, *from* what men were to be saved and *by* what means have in the course of centuries become enveloped in a shroud of mystery which few have been able to penetrate satisfactorily. When our Lord ascended into the heavens, we are told, a cloud received him, and a cloud, the cloud of theology, has ever since partially obscured him from men's sight. For a thousand years after our Lord's ascension a terrible and wicked falsehood concerning the purpose of his coming into this world of ours was not only imagined, but openly taught throughout Christendom; and for the best part of another thousand years there have been taught concerning this same event, doctrines, which to say the least, have not

been acceptable to *all* who have given thought to them. The consciousness that there is something wrong has created a spirit of unrest among Christian men and led many to doubt, and some, in the exercise of their imagination, to deny fundamental facts of the Christian religion; the divinity of our Lord, his miraculous birth, and his glorious resurrection! But, if there be anything wrong, it is not with matters of fact, but with matters of opinion. In the few chapters of this book an attempt has been made to set down, as nearly as possible in the language in which it has come down to us, the purpose of the coming of the Lord as it seems to have been revealed by himself, the greatest of them, and those other Holy Prophets, who, from Isaiah to John the Baptist were preparing, in the wilderness of the world a Highway for him to pass over. A Highway that is still not without obstruction. The book is not a contribution to controversial theology; but a summary of facts *suggestively* but not exhaustively presented, from which the reader who is free to consider them with a mind unbiassed may draw his own conclusions. If these differ from those suggested in the book no harm will have been done; while if they are in agreement with them a window will have been opened in his mind through which he may behold a vision of Christian Unity based upon a foundation of Christian Truth.

“Our little systems have their day;
They have their day, and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

THE TEXT.

Then began Jesus to speak to the people this parable :

A certain man planted a vineyard and let it forth to husbandmen and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard; but the husbandmen beat him and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out. Then said the Lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved Son; it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

What, therefore, shall the Lord of the vineyard do unto them?

He shall come and destroy these husbandmen and shall give the vineyard to others.

And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures,

The stone which the builders rejected,

The same is become the head of the corner :

This is the Lord's doing

And it is marvellous in our eyes?

Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Luke xx, 9. Matt. xxi, 42.

CHAPTER I.

“THEN SAID I: ‘LO I COME * * *
TO DO THY WILL!’”

Ps. xl, 7.

THE greatest event in the history of the human race since the creation of man, was the birth of Jesus Christ, the appearance of God on earth in human flesh, commonly called the INCARNATION.

This proposition is not stated for the purpose of argument or of proof. The incarnation is, beyond all doubt, the central FACT in a system upon which the eternal happiness of all humanity depends, and is here so regarded.

Before the coming to pass of the event, the incarnation was the great theme of DIVINE REVELATION; afterwards, it became a theme of endless HUMAN SPECULATION. From this human speculation has been evolved and formulated what is called CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, theology meaning literally the Science of God.

If this is not always entirely satisfactory to those who teach it or those who are taught, the probable reason is, that the Christian religion is unadapted to scientific treatment. But, if it were otherwise, it must be remembered that Christian theology had its

beginning in an age long before men had learned that the only real foundation of science is *the examination of facts* and reached its final development at a time when men gave greater credence to their theories than to the evidence of their senses.

What follows is a brief examination, without regard to the speculations of human interpreters, into what seems to have been the FACTS *divinely* taught concerning the *purpose* contemplated by the birth, in an obscure corner of the Roman empire, in the reign of Augustus, of the infant Jesus.

Into a discussion of that subtle network of doctrine which has been woven around the incarnation it does not enter; but as we are, in the course of the examination proposed, certain to come in contact with it we must take into account that modicum of theology which is now generally held by all Christian people, without distinction, concerning the MISSION of our Lord. This may be briefly and moderately summarized somewhat to this effect:

That it was a LOST WORLD that the Son of Man came to seek and to save. That this world was lost through the failure of the first created man to obey a certain commandment given him, by which failure, sin and death were brought into the world and human nature was permanently corrupted; sin being thenceforward a hereditary or congenital disease from which no one has since been able to escape.

That the rejection and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ were PREDESTINED and unavoid-

able; the crucifixion being a necessary SACRIFICE absolutely demanded by existing conditions.

That it was to suffer death upon the cross that our Lord humbled himself to take man's nature upon him, and that from the beginning of his ministry he knew what its end would be.

Happily, there is such a life-giving force in simple faith in Jesus Christ, as God and Saviour, that mere inability to comprehend the whole truth concerning him cannot deprive his followers of the blessings which the incarnation was intended to bring, and no amount of diverse and contradictory teaching has been able to make this faith altogether ineffective. Still, any teaching which conveys an erroneous notion of God's dealings with his children must, in some measure at least, be detrimental to the spiritual development of those who entertain it; Error being now, as always, the greatest foe of Holiness. Probably all the wrong doing of which the world has any record, not excepting the greatest of all wrong doings, might be traced back to the NOT KNOWING of those who *thought* they knew. "I wot that through ignorance ye did it" said Peter, with a sublime charity learned from Him who prayed, "Father forgive them for they KNOW NOT what they do". "Error and darkness" declares the writer of Ecclesiasticus "had their beginning together".

While abstract theology never won a soul to God, doctrines obnoxious to reason we know have lost many a one. A little root of reasonable doubt unsatisfied weakens the foundation of faith and

often causes the total destruction of the superstructure which has been built upon it.

Our Father does not require of his children that they should sacrifice their reason; but, rather, *demands* the exercise of it:

“He that made us * *

* * gave us not

That capability and Godlike reason

To rust in us unused”

in things eternal, any more than in things temporal:

“Come now and let us reason together” he saith.

By the exercise of his reason man has raised himself to his present high position in the animal kingdom. By this Godlike and God-given faculty he maintains his position above the level of the brute.

Bereft of reason he falls below it. Reason must always, with reasoning and reasonable creatures, be the final arbiter of every proposition, whether profane or sacred. By the exercise of reason alone, however, man cannot hope to attain to a perfect knowledge of God; he tried to and failed; but reason, illuminated by the light of divine revelation, may reasonably aspire to that knowledge and love of God which constitute TRUE RELIGION.

Without reason, religion is superstition; without revelation, it is idolatry. Of true religion, all we know is what God in his goodness has been pleased to reveal to us; that which he is not pleased to reveal to us must remain unknown. No human hypothesis, however scientific or ingenious, can supply the deficiencies of divine revelation. As a missionary of the second century aptly said:

“Where God is silent, it is not wise to speak.”

These observations may seem trite and commonplace, but they are made here mainly by way of answer to those who hold the opinion that the Christian religion is not a *reasonable* thing, or who think that there is something improper in applying their everyday reason to its comprehension. Truly, there is *nothing unreasonable* in the Christian religion, and reason can have no higher employment than in investigating its foundations.

False religion has always discouraged investigation. When that which taxed the credulity of its votaries was inquired into, it was proclaimed a mystery too sacred for any but the initiated. It is not necessary so to bound Christ's religion, every follower of which is initiated on equal terms and by the same formalities, whether peasant, priest or king. Rightly considered there is no mystery in the Christian religion. It consists in part of things revealed and of things unrevealed. Whether our contemplation of things unrevealed ends simply in amazement or in insanity, there is but one cause for the condition, which is that it is impossible for the unassisted human mind to comprehend the things of God, which he, for his purpose has covered with a veil. "Secret things", said Moses, "belong unto the Lord God, revealed things to us and our children forever."

Thanks be to God for the revelation of himself and of his purposes for mankind through the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby creatures of dust otherwise doomed to dwell in darkness are led into the brightness of a perpetual light.

CHAPTER II.

“THIS IS MY BELOVED SON : HEAR HIM.”

Mark xiv, 7.

“TO THIS END AM I COME INTO THE WORLD,
THAT I SHOULD BEAR WITNESS UNTO THE
TRUTH.”

John xviii, 37.

AN account of the direct revelations of God to man concerning their mutual relationship is to be found in a certain book. This book is by universal consent called by a name which means The Book, or Book of all books. Really, it is a collection of books written by many hands in many tongues and in different centuries, brought together under a general title. Its authors are in some cases known to us, in others they are anonymous. It comprises prose and poetry, biography, history and fiction, a compendium of law, moral precepts and philosophical maxims, books of public and private devotion and the recorded words of those holy prophets who in different ages, have been sent into the world to declare the will of God. Each individual book must be considered by itself, and much evil has been done by considering the Bible as an entirety.

The book has two principal divisions respectively entitled the OLD TESTAMENT and the NEW TESTAMENT. Concerning the first something may be said later: we are now more deeply concerned with the latter; but it may properly be noted here, that if these two principal divisions of the book had been called in our language the OLD COVENANT and the NEW COVENANT, titles equally agreeable to the meaning of the word from which Testament is derived, we should have the advantage of being reminded, whenever we think of these divisions, of the essential truths the Christian religion teaches; one, that the Mosaic Law is OLD and obsolete, and the other that that which has superseded it is the NEW Covenant, of which the Lord Jesus Christ was the messenger and preacher.

Concerning the use of this book, there are several schools. One school regards its authority as supreme, another claims that there is authority equal, if not superior, to it. The latter school speaks slightingly of the religion of the first as a religion founded on a book. This slight might be passed over, but it is better to examine the statement. The Christian religion is not founded on a book: it is founded on the word of God. We may write this expression with capital letters, if we will, but however its significance may be limited, it is obvious that no other authoritative foundation for a religion is possible.

The principal writers of the New Testament were the men chosen by the Lord Jesus himself to disseminate his religion throughout the world, and

these men took pains, at a very early date, to preserve in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, a history of those remarkable events of which they directly or indirectly had had "a perfect understanding". This is the expression of the evangelist Luke. John, the evangelist who was nearer to our Lord, says: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you".

The fact is, and this fact gives the Christian religion an advantage as to authority over every other, that there is and has been since the time of Moses at least, which to the present day embraces a period of nearly four thousand years, a literature which has concerned itself exclusively with God's dealings with man and has recorded these as matters of history, step by step, through every age. "Thou shalt *read* this" said Moses "that they may hear and learn and that their children which have not known may hear and learn." "Have ye not *read*" said our Saviour many times, and "It is *written*", repeatedly. "They have Moses and the prophets" said he "let them hear them", "Search the scriptures". The Holy Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are not isolated records, but an integral part of this literature, which is the Church's cherished and very choice possession. He who said "I am the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE" would hardly have left the ages to come without directions *unmistakable* for finding that WAY, that TRUTH and that LIFE. There is an assuring note of personality in this statement of our Lord's akin to that in many other gracious sayings of his: "He that cometh to ME, I will in no wise cast

out;" "I am the good shepherd;" "I am the door;" "Learn of ME;" "If any man thirst, let him come unto ME"; "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, I give unto them eternal life; and no one shall snatch them out of MY hand;" which makes the Christian feel impatient of any interposed authority between himself and what he may reasonably believe to be our Saviour's own language. Men would not speak of a "traditional Christ" if they realized that in this gospel is a portrait of the actual Christ, under which may truly be written, as the old masters used to write under their portraits, *pinxit ad vivum*; a portrait painted in fadeless colors very unlike the lifeless figures since painted by human hands. It is this living figure of the Christ of the Gospel, of the LIGHT which lighteth every man which cometh into the world, which preserves the unity of the Christian religion. The personality of our Lord stands out in the Gospels as the peak of a mountain sometimes stands out, clear and distinct in the sunshine, while all below is enveloped in fog or cloud.

Nor is it necessary to look further than the Gospel for the whole of the message to humanity with which the Lord Jesus was charged. The word Gospel in our tongue means literally "good news", and it is not without reason that we believe that the actual words in which the good news was first told have been preserved to us by our Lord's own appointment.

The beloved disciple tells us that "when Jesus knew that his hour was come when he should depart out of this world unto the Father", that is,

when his personal ministrations and his public discourses had been brought to an end, the cross being but a few hours away, and he could look forward to the work he had undertaken being henceforward carried on without his visible presence, there being at that time no written record of any word which he had spoken—the only writing of his of which there is any authentic record having been written in sand—our Lord promised that ONE should bring to the remembrance of the apostles **WHATSOEVER THINGS HE HAD SAID TO THEM**. For what purpose may we suppose was this, if not that a knowledge of these things might be preserved for the instruction of *future* generations as an authorized record of the doctrines he himself had taught? And in what manner were these things, which he had said to them, to be preserved, if not in writing?

If, then, as this evangelist's words imply, we have the authority of our Lord himself for the inspiration of the written gospel, or at least so much of it as records his utterances,—an authority which does not extend to the other books of the New Testament—it would seem that in any conflict of opinion as to the doctrines of the Christian religion the words of the Lord Jesus contained in the gospel should be decisive. "The words that *I* speak unto you" said he "they are SPIRIT and they are LIFE"; "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my *words* shall *not* pass away." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, *He that heareth my words* and believeth on him that sent me, is *passed from death unto life*". Surely it is not unreasonable to believe

that special means should have been used to so preserve words of such immense importance that they might be handed down, without corruption, from generation to generation forever. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them" said our Saviour "I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock."

The manner in which these sayings have come down to us is not important. Had the Lord Jesus ordained that his bare words should be transmitted, from one age to another, without context, we should still have had the essentials of his teaching; but as a matter of fact they have come down to us enshrined, like precious jewels in a golden casket, within the narratives of the Holy Evangelists, and we believe that we hear to-day, as in the day of Pentecost, "every man in our own tongue" "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."

There was a time when it was thought sinful to question anything in the Bible, but to-day we think differently. It is a self-evident proposition that no questioning can injure TRUTH, and there is no reverent criticism that the WORD of GOD may fear. Irreverent criticism is necessarily outside of the pale of consideration by Christian people. Fault finding and the detection of flaws are not criticism. Criticism is judgment, and any just criticism of the Bible must be beneficial. The Bible criticised is like a diamond recut; if its substance is reduced, that which remains shines with greater brilliancy. Errors of copyists, mistranslations from one language to another, and other accidents we may, without treason, readily acknowledge to have

occurred during the thousands of years, preceding the introduction of the art of printing, during which the books of the Bible were copied and recopied by human hands; and the wonder is, humanly speaking, not that these accidents did occur, but that in spite of them, the truths enshrined in the original pages are still so clear that he who runs may read them. "By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live" said Moses, and the apostle Peter added "The word of the Lord endureth forever".

We have not to consider the nature of INSPIRATION, but we must remember that the supreme and only full revelation of God to man was through the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. No man hath otherwise seen God nor so unmistakably heard words from his mouth. God, we believe, is a being having neither hands, nor feet, nor tongue, and when he requires the offices performed for which these members are designed he has to enlist human agency. The Spirit of God inspired the prophets of old, but the prophets were human beings and they expressed, with the limitations of human understanding and human expression, the ideas which God revealed to them; but when Incarnate God came to visit the children of men, we may justly reason that his revelation was without such limitations.

As at dawn of day the stars which have brightened and made beautiful the night become fainter and fainter, and, as the sun gains power, disappear, one by one, until at last there is in the heavens but one great light to be seen; so the light shed by

the prophets and teachers who went before the Lord, pales into insignificance before that great Light, which, having once attained its meridian, knew no going down. "God", says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son * * the effulgence of his glory and the exact expression of his substance." Can we wonder that it was said of him "Never man spake like this man"? And are we not justified in considering that the words from his mouth are entitled to a position of pre-eminence over any other words ever written or spoken since the beginning of time? In these pages it is assumed that we are. If there is no other name under heaven whereby men may be saved, surely what He who bore that name said on the subject or manner of that salvation should be man's first, if not his only, study in it.

CHAPTER III.

“THE WORDS THAT I SAY UNTO YOU I SPEAK
NOT FROM MYSELF.” *John xiv, 10.*

“I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN A PARABLE.”
Ps. lxxviii, 2.

WITH so much premised by way of introduction we are now prepared to take up our text. Let us glance at it again; Jesus is speaking:

“A certain man planted a vineyard and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant; and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty. And again he sent a third; and they wounded him also and cast him out. Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it *may be* they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir; come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

“What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

“He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others.”

In this parable the Lord Jesus Christ has re-

vealed, under the similitude of an earthly story, a circumstantial account of the purpose of his incarnation, revealing it thus, according to the evangelist Matthew, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet; I will open my mouth in parables; I WILL UTTER THINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN KEPT SECRET FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD." "He taught them many things by parables" says one evangelist, and "without a parable", says another, "spake he not unto them".

This manner of teaching was a favorite one with our Lord, whereby he availed himself of that dramatic instinct which is common to humanity, (more common, perhaps, to the unlearned than to the learned), to make his teaching effective and easy of remembrance. The parables of our Lord are all strikingly dramatic. They are full of action. In a few brief sentences are sketched a whole history, as in the one we are now considering.

In this parable the characters are the Lord of the Vineyard, his servants, his son and the husbandmen to whom the vineyard was let out. The scene is the vineyard. The period embraces several seasons. In the interpretation the Lord of the Vineyard is our heavenly Father, whose exhaustless patience, enduring love and long suffering nature are vividly set forth. The servants are his Holy Prophets, the Son is none other than the Lord Jesus himself. The husbandmen are the men of Judah, the Jewish nation, and the vineyard is Judea. The period covers twenty centuries. In the story there is a veritable history, a prophecy and a brief

application or moral indicating the consequences to ensue, *should those to whom the Son was sent reject him.*

In this parable, our Lord represents the Father as saying, when all other means have failed to touch the consciences of his people, "I will send my beloved Son; IT MAY BE they will reverence him, when they see him." "It may be", said Ezekiel, of these same men of Judah, "It may be, they will consider though they be a rebellious house". But having less discernment than the ox and the ass, they did not consider, neither in the days of Ezekiel, nor later, when the last opportunity for consideration was offered them.

There is much significance in the expression "It may be" or "perhaps". If it has not the meaning it seems to have, it is not needed. It is an unusual redundancy on our Lord's part, or it must be taken literally. So construed, it contradicts very emphatically the generally received view that the Father's purpose in sending his well beloved Son to visit his people was that he might undergo humiliation and suffer a cruel death at the hands of those who had so shamefully treated his other messengers, the prophets. Rather than this, it indicates a confidence in his people so great, that in spite of their centuries of obstinacy and rebellion, he was unwilling to believe them capable of such extremity of wickedness as they afterwards actually manifested: "when they see him they will reverence him" was a more natural anticipation for the Father of such a Son than "when they see him they will put him to death".

That the incarnation of the Son of God was predestined from the beginning of the world for the exaltation and everlasting benefit of the human race is a most comforting fact to be assured of ; but if it be true that the crucifixion was also predestined for man's benefit, then there would seem to be plausibility in the idea that that event which we are told is responsible for the crucifixion, the so-called FALL OF MAN, must also have been predestined. Such a conclusion, be it reverently said, partakes somewhat of the nature of a *reductio ad absurdum*.

The purposes of God are *ends*, not means, and we may be assured that the purposes of God will never fail, however the means for consummating them may be changed or thwarted. Of this, the instances are innumerable.

CHAPTER IV.

“SACRIFICE AND OFFERING THOU DIDST NOT
REQUIRE.”

Ps. xl, 6.

THAT there are in the Old Testament prophecies which point to the crucifixion, death and resurrection of our Lord, is not to be disputed; but the purpose a prophecy is intended to serve must be understood before it can be interpreted with certainty. The purposes of prophecy are several but we have only to deal with two of them. One purpose is to predict an event as a threat or warning; that of Jonah predicting the destruction of Nineveh is a well known instance, and in this case we know that, the warning being heeded, the prophecy was not fulfilled and Nineveh was spared. Another purpose of prophecy is to identify the subject with the prediction after fulfilment. The prophecy is then as “a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn”—the day of fulfilment.

The prophecy concerning our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, sitting on an ass's colt, we are told “understood not his disciples at first; but when Jesus was glorified then remembered they that these things were written of him.” Written of him 500 years before. Prophecies of this character are dark sayings, indeed, at the time of their first utter-

ance, and remain so till the light of fulfilment makes their meaning clear. This light it is which has made the prophecies referring to our Lord's sufferings stand out in such relief. The dark saying or riddle and its interpretation, the prophecy and the historical fact, come to us together, and we have no need to call for Chaldean or soothsayer to decipher the otherwise unintelligible writing. But it does not follow of necessity that our Lord's death had to accord with these prophecies. These might, under different circumstances, have been left in company with other still dark sayings, had a happier ending attended his life on earth. The predictions of our Lord's *sufferings* evidently were not intended to point him out to his contemporaries as the Messiah, nor to indicate a course of action for his enemies to follow but they were intended to identify him as the subject of the predictions in the event of their subsequent fulfilment. The prophecies by which the Messiah was to be recognized, were unmistakable and admit of but one interpretation. "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see" said Jesus "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them". These were the characteristics by which the finger of prophecy pointed to the Messiah 700 years before the time of his coming, and we can readily understand how their citation by our Lord convinced the Baptist that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the long expected one, and that there was no need to look for another.

May we not believe that different circumstances might have made it possible for the prophecy of Isaiah, unhappily fulfilled, "He is despised and rejected", to have remained a dark saying forever? and in place of it we might now read, understandingly, the unfulfilled prophecy,

"And it shall be said *in that day*,

Lo, this is our God!

We have waited for him and he will save us:

This is the Lord!

We have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his SALVATION."

Isaiah had a vision of the Lord in the temple very unlike anything that ever took place in reality, and Haggai prophesied that the glory of the temple to which the Messiah should come should exceed the glory of that former house which we know was glorified by a visible manifestation of the divine presence. "I will *fill* this house with glory saith the Lord of Hosts * * * * and in this place will I give peace". No temple made with hands was ever so glorified as the temple of Herod, trodden by the blessed feet of the Lord Jesus, but his visitation without recognition and honored only by the Hosannas of a street crowd who a few days after were to clamor for his death, scarcely fulfils the prophecy, while the later total destruction of the temple makes its future fulfilment impossible. The call:

"Lift up your heads O ye gates!"

that the King of Glory may come in was *never* answered.

“In that day” does not mean in any other day, but that day of visitation when the MESSENGER of the COVENANT should come to his holy temple, to “my house”, as our Lord called it. Likewise, when Jeremiah foretold the terms of the new covenant, it was to be with the house of Israel and the house of Judah and by no license can it be assumed that the prophet referred to the Gentile world.

As quoted by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the words of the prophecy are these:

“Behold the days come saith the Lord that I will make a NEW COVENANT with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; * * * but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days * * I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts and will be their God, and they shall be my people: * * * for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more.”

With no house of Israel, no house of Judah, with a people who once were the people of God, but now are not his people, how can this prophecy be explained otherwise than as referring to a condition which might have been, had those for whose benefit it was written known the *time* of their visitation? The new covenant was to be made with the house of Israel, and the promise was not by its terms transferable. If a people other than the house of Israel or the men of Judah ultimately

enjoyed the fulfilment of the promise, it must have been in the character of those "other husbandmen" of the parable, to whom the vineyard was to be transferred if the original tenants by putting to death the WELL BELOVED SON of the owner showed their unworthiness to be continued longer in possession.

If the promise had been fulfilled in accordance with the prophecy of Jeremiah, and not in accordance with the parable of our Lord, Jerusalem might not have become a heap of stones, and the Jews might have been spared the reproof of being "a proverb and a by-word among all people", and, instead of its present deserts, the land of Israel might "be a delightsome land" blossoming and flourishing as the rose, with its fields bringing forth fruit abundantly, sometimes thirty and sometimes sixty and sometimes a hundred fold; but with the terrible punishment inflicted upon them by Titus, when their holy city was blotted out and their existence as a nation was finally destroyed some thirty-seven years after their crucifixion of the Son of God, it cannot be said that the Lord forgave the iniquity of his people and remembered their sins no more. We can only interpret the prophecy of Jeremiah by the light of the prophecy contained in the parable that the Lord of the vineyard would come *in vengeance* and terribly punish the house of Israel and the men of Judah, taking away the Kingdom of God from them and *giving it to another people*.

It would not have been Godlike to make a promise with no intention of fulfilling it, or to ac-

company it with conditions which it was impossible for those to whom it was made to fulfil. The conditions of the promise we must understand were capable of fulfilment; they were not fulfilled and the terrible consequences predicted ensued. For what purpose, may we ask, did the Lord rise up early and send his servants, the prophets, to warn his people, if attention to the warnings could not change a predetermined purpose? If his people had heeded these warnings, would they still have been punished? There is only one reasonable answer.

Malachi prophesied that when the Messenger should come to his temple, he should purify the sons of Levi, that is the Jewish priesthood, that they might offer an offering in righteousness, an offering that should be pleasant unto the Lord. Is it reasonable to believe that the body of his beloved SON, subjected to gross indignity and nailed to the cross, was such an offering? If we judge by our Lord's denunciations of them, the Sons of Levi refused to be purified.

Isaiah's prophecy of the coming of our Lord commences with a message of comfort to Jerusalem that her iniquity is pardoned. But her iniquity was not pardoned, for the reason that when he who had the pardon in his hand "came unto his own, his own received him not". The wicked husbandmen said "This is the heir, Come let us kill him". "The base Judean threw a pearl away richer than all his tribe".

CHAPTER V.

“BEHOLD THY KING COMETH”.

Zechariah ix, 9.

THE idea of the Messiah prevailing among the Jews immediately before, and during, our Lord's visitation, and indeed among his own disciples, was that he should not only be a Saviour who should save them from their sins, but their temporal deliverer; a deliverer from the rule of the hated usurper then sitting upon the throne of David, and from the yoke of their heathen masters, a king

“Higher than the kings of the earth”, who should personally reign over them and raise their nation to an eminence of glory and power beyond anything that had ever preceded it. When the wise men, led by a star, reached Bethlehem, their inquiry was “Where is he that is born *King* of the Jews?” The promise of the angel Gabriel to the mother of our Lord was that God would give unto him the *throne* of his father David; “Rabbi” said Nathanael “thou art the Son of God; thou art the *King* of Israel” and when Zacharias, moved by the Holy Spirit, prophesied concerning the mission of John, the tenor of his prophecy was that he, John, should go before and prepare the way of One of the house of David, who should

save the people from their enemies *and those that hated them*, that they might serve God *without fear*, in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. Although a spiritual meaning for these words is possible, their literal meaning was the more obvious. It was the earthly enemies of Israel of whom Zacharias was thinking and who must have been uppermost in the minds of those who heard him.

The prophets had declared that Jerusalem was to be a dwelling place for the great king. Zechariah had the word of the Lord for it and the city was to be called the City of TRUTH: Lo, I come and I will dwell in the midst of thee saith the Lord and he who toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye. Jerusalem was to be as a city not needing walls for its defence, for the Lord was to be unto her a wall of fire round about and the glory in the midst of her. Swear not by Jerusalem, said Jesus, for it is the city of the great KING. What King? Surely not Herod! Not David, for in his days the city did not even boast of a house of God; not Solomon, for a greater than Solomon was speaking. No words could be more explicit than those of Jeremiah wherein he says:

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord
That I will raise unto David a righteous Branch,
And a KING shall reign and prosper,
And shall execute judgment and justice *in the earth.*

In his days Judah shall be saved,
And Israel shall dwell safely.”

Have these words any meaning?

Micah, who prophesied concerning the birth-place of our Lord, said:

“Out of thee will come forth for me

One who is to become *ruler* in Israel.”

“In that day” many nations were to be joined to the Lord: “It shall come to pass” said Jeremiah “when ye be multiplied * * * * that they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord and all the nations shall be gathered unto it”; especially, Egypt and Assyria were to be as one people with Israel. “My house shall be called an house of prayer for *all* nations” quoted our Lord from Isaiah. The Psalms are filled with predictions of like import. The Lord had sworn unto David that of the fruit of his body, no interloper or usurper, but one of the household and lineage of David, should sit upon his throne, for the Lord had desired Jerusalem for his habitation: her poor were to be satisfied with bread and her priests “clothed with SALVATION”. But this promise, like all the others, was *conditional*. There was a terrible “if”. “*If* thy children will keep my covenant” were the terms upon which the promises were conditioned.

“Oh that thou *hadst* hearkened to my commandments!

Then had thy peace been as a river,

And thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: * *

HIS NAME SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN
CUT OFF NOR DESTROYED FROM BE-
FORE ME.”

These few citations show that there were, running through the Old Testament, two parallel streams of prophecy, one indicating the establishment by the Messiah of a kingdom of great glory of which Jerusalem was to be the centre and himself the head, and the other indicating an ignominious and shameful termination of his work.

To fulfil these predictions, the Jew argues that two Messiahs are needed, one to suffer and one to reign, and the Christian tries to explain a seeming paradox by postponing the fulfilment of the first mentioned class of prophecies to a later day; to the second coming of the same Messiah. Both explanations overlook the important fact that those prophecies which refer to the Jewish city of Jerusalem, to a Jewish kingdom and nation, to the Jewish priesthood and to the temple at Jerusalem, can never be fulfilled, for the reason that the subjects of them have disappeared forever. The pious Hebrew, year after year, as often as the sacred Day of Atonement comes round, laments this fact and says "But now O Lord our God! the sanctuary is destroyed, the service has ceased; we have no more a leader as in former days, no high priest to bring offerings, no altar for sacrifices." This but paraphrases a part of the 74th Psalm: "O God wherefore art thou absent from us so long? Why is thy wrath so hot against the sheep of thy pasture? We see not our *tokens*; there is not one prophet more; no, *not one is there among us that understandeth any more.*"

We may call Jesus of Nazareth our King, if we will, as long as we are his loyal subjects and fight

under his banner, but that does not constitute him the enthroned successor of David who never was king of ours. The heathen Roman, who sat in judgment upon him, whether by inspiration or otherwise, we know not, recognized the legitimacy of Jesus when he caused the title of accusation placed upon his cross to read: "THIS IS JESUS THE KING of the JEWS". "Write not," said the chief priests, "The King of the Jews, but that he said, I am King of the Jews," and Pilate answered "What I have written I have written". And this title was inscribed in Hebrew, in Greek and in Latin. All of these languages are now called dead languages, languages spoken by no nation on earth, but the words of Pilate will nevertheless live to the end of the ages, a perpetual reminder of the kingship of Jesus.

A reasonable solution of the difficulty which the two streams of prophecy appear to raise is, that one was adapted to the *acceptance* of Jesus by the Jewish nation as their King and Saviour and the other to their *rejection* of him, one of which courses of action being adopted, the prophecies referring to the opposite course necessarily became void and of no effect.

If this view is not immediately admitted from *prima facie* evidence, then to strengthen the case, we must fall back upon the fact of the conditional nature of *all* the Old Testament promises. Among these, those threatening direful consequences against a nation were to be withdrawn in case they were undeserved, and blessings promised were to be withheld if those to whom the promise was

given proved unworthy to receive them. By the mouth of Jeremiah God said:

“At what instant I shall speak concerning a kingdom,

To pluck, and to pull down, and to destroy it:

If that nation against whom I have pronounced
turn from their evil,

I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto
them.

And at what instant I shall speak concerning a
nation

And concerning a kingdom, to build and plant it:

If it do evil in my sight that it obey not my voice,

Then I will repent of the good wherewith I said
I would benefit them”.

Elsewhere he says “Behold I will bring upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them.” For what reason? Because it was so ordained? That is not the answer of the prophet to the question; he says “Because I have spoken unto them; *but they have not heard*; and I have *called* unto them *but they have not answered*.” But for the pleading of Moses it should be remembered the Lord, when he saw the idolatry in the wilderness, would have nullified even the promises to Abraham.

Somewhat analogous to the conditional interpretation of the written prophecies, is the acted prophecy of Abraham offering up on the altar on Mount Moriah, possibly the very place where Jesus suffered later, *his* only son. In that case, we know, that at the moment when the knife was raised to

slay, a way was found for the deliverance of the intended victim. Now it must be evident that anyone knowing the circumstances of Isaac's case and knowing moreover that they prefigured in a very remarkable manner an event to come, would at any time, before the coming to pass of the event prefigured, have drawn a conclusion as to the manner in which the earthly career of the chief actor in the drama would end, very different from that which actually took place. In this instance, the acted prophecy or parable would have been equally available as a prophecy, if our Lord had been spared the cup of extreme sorrow, instead of being compelled to drink it. As it stands, it shows that God did *not* desire human sacrifice. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" he said. But as the Lord Jesus pointed out, more than once, the Jews did not understand the meaning of these words. Had they done so, there might not have been such a manifest difference between God's treatment of the Son of Abraham and the treatment which the descendants of Abraham meted out to the Son of God. "If ye had known what this means 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice'" said Jesus "YE WOULD NOT HAVE CONDEMNED THE GUILTLESS."

The averted sacrifice of Isaac proved Abraham's *faith*. The sacrifice of Jesus proved God's *love*. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend, if necessary. The words "if necessary" are not in the text; but they must be understood. The sacrifice of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God, was necessary, not because it had been predestined or foreordained for ages,

but because of the hatred of the Jews, a hatred born of the intolerance which orthodox error ever has for heterodox truth. They would have it so. Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! they cried, and when remonstrated with by a Gentile, "they cried out the more Let him be crucified."

It may not have much significance, but it is worthy of note, that the scapegoat, which figured so prominently in the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, that greatest of all days in the Jewish Church, which bore, symbolically, the sins of the whole nation upon his head, was *not* slain, although both priest and altar were at hand.

If there was no alternative to the crucifixion, with what sort of understanding can we contemplate our Lord's tears for Jerusalem and his lamentations for the fate of the city he loved. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings and ye would not". "O that thou hadst but known in *this thy day* the things which are for thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes * * * *because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*" If it was decreed by the Father that they should crucify the Son when he came to claim the tribute so long withheld; if they had no will of their own, no option or choice but to do the shameful deed, then it would seem that the actors in it should be relieved from the odium attaching to the dreadful and unparalleled crime which they were foreordained to commit. If the tragedy of the cross

was a performance the plot of which had been constructed ages before, then must the actors in it have had their several parts prepared for them. Should we not, then, if such were the case, instead of calling them murderers, call them executioners? This is an awful question to answer, but the affirmative position taken seems to justify it. Furthermore, if the position taken be correct, how is it possible to understand the tone of disappointment in Isaiah's lamentation:

"What could have been done more to my vineyard
That I have not done in it?
Wherefore when I looked that it should bring
forth grapes,
Brought it forth wild grapes?"

"The Lord of Hosts looked for righteousness, but behold a cry!" Does this suggest an unalterable decree? "Knowest thou not" said Pilate "that I have power to crucify thee and have power *to release thee*." Jesus, in replying, denied not but said "Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above." Would our Saviour have prayed "Father, forgive them", if those for whom he prayed had been the selected instruments of the Father and dependent upon him for praise or blame? Would he have prayed on the eve of the crucifixion "If it be possible let this cup pass from me", if he had known that it was *not* possible, and would the prophet have put into his mouth the words "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow", if he was obediently performing an agreed-upon act and all that

was happening was part of a long predestined and unalterable scheme?

To foreknow is one thing; to foreordain is another, and to foretell or predict an event is not necessarily to foreordain it, or cause it to come to pass. When a seed is planted in the ground it is beyond human ability to foretell positively what the immediate result will be; but it can only be one of two things, the seed will either germinate or it will not, but with either result assumed or determined it is then an easy matter to predict the further consequences. It is not for finite man to say what is or is not possible to the Infinite, but may we not reasonably ask, Would God, after giving man unlimited power to do or to refrain from doing, be likely to predict with definiteness the acts of those to whom he had given this power? If our answer is in the negative, we do not by any means throw doubt upon the reasonableness of God's act in dictating, for a purpose, to his servants the prophets, the *consequences* of the assumed acts of such free agent.

CHAPTER VI.

“HOW SHALL I CURSE, WHOM GOD HATH NOT
CURSED.” *Numbers xxiii, 8.*

WE may find an answer to the questions raised in the last chapter in our Lord's own teaching; but before we can make further appeal to this, we must give some little attention to that event which it is said made the crucifixion inevitable and brought death into the world for us all; the disobedience of the reputed first created man and woman. Our spiritual horizon will not be clear, so long as there is a haze in our minds concerning this.

If the earlier event in any way made the later one necessary, or corrupted the race of mankind as reported there is not the slightest recognition of the fact in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who never in any speech recorded of him mentioned Adam or Eve, or said one word direct or by implication even mildly derogatory of that nature which he came down from heaven expressly to take upon himself.

It may make no difference to our eternal well being, the great end of God's goodness and love, whether the Lord Jesus came into this world of ours predestined to suffer death upon the cross, or

whether coming for a different purpose, cruel men, the husbandmen of the parable, condemned him to death of their *own* determination and out of their *own* evil hearts; and seeing that physical death is the common end of every created thing endowed at any time with life, we may rest content to bear our part in the general fate, regardless of the cause, except so far as the pursuit of truth interests us; but that doctrine which declares that every new minted Image of God is representative of a *debased* coinage and bears upon its obverse the superscription of Satan, strikes at the moral constitution and dignity of the human race and it must be accepted or denied before the incarnation can have a meaning for us.

It is difficult for the ordinary mind to conceive of our heavenly Father sending his children into the world so handicapped in running the race which is set before them, and it is gratifying to reflect that there is no warrant *whatever* in the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to justify it. Actual experience teaches us that it is those only who have recently come into the world who are really capable of knowing the full joy of living,

“Ere doubt, or fear, or love, *or act of sin*,
Hath marred God’s light within.”

“Of such” said not our Lord is the kingdom of Satan, but “the kingdom of heaven”. “Woe unto him who deceiveth one of these”. “It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that *one* of these little ones should perish”.

The barrier between man and his Maker, is

raised by contact with the world and temptation, and to contemplate our Lord as one whose office it is to save us from the sin of an ancestor as remote and visionary as Adam, is to divert our attention from the relation between our *personal* sins and our *personal* Saviour. One of the meanest traits of our human nature, perhaps, is that which seeks excuse for our own wrongdoing by putting the blame upon someone else, and in this respect at least man to-day is very like the Adam of the Old Testament, and this doctrine, the doctrine of original sin, gives him an ever present opportunity for the exercise of this trait in his nature.

Of the titles bestowed upon our Lord, the most appropriate is JESUS HOMINUM SALVATOR; Jesus the Saviour of Men, not Salvator Mundi or Saviour of the World, for the world is yet a long way from being saved, but every individual in it may own the Lord Jesus as his own personal Saviour, if he so desires. A Saviour who not only saves from the consequences of sins committed, but saves from the commission of them.

Sin generally is a subject which must be treated by itself: we are now considering one particular phase of it, the so-called hereditary or birth sin, and for the foundation of the doctrine we are referred to the story told in the Book of Genesis, that Book of Beginnings full of allegory and metaphor, symbolism and poetry. Let us read the story.

The story in brief is, that God, in the beginning, made man out of the dust of the earth, but in his own image, that he gave him a commandment to observe, that man *under temptation* disobeyed the

divine commandment and for his disobedience he was summarily judged and sentenced. The man and his companion were sent forth from the garden in which God had placed them, a curse was put, *not on the man or his wife or their descendents*, but only upon the ground given him to till, which henceforward was condemned to bring forth thorns and thistles and, because of their sin, sorrow was to be theirs all the days of their mortal life.

From this relation the conclusion has been drawn that the first man, having been created sinless, whatever that may mean, would but for his disobedience have transmitted to his remotest posterity a nature incapable of sin and the world would have remained indefinitely in a state of innocence and virtue; but forasmuch as he transgressed the commandment and became a law-breaker instead of a law-observer, he had only a law-breaker's nature to transmit, and that he actually has transmitted through uncounted generations a law-breaking or sinful nature which is borne by everyone that comes into the world.

Now, this is a most inexact conclusion to draw from the story, as we shall see if we examine it. Adam sinned, wilfully or not at all. He must have had the power to resist the temptation set before him, or to succumb to it. If he had no such power, then neither blame nor punishment should have been his; but the fact of a punishment being inflicted indicates that he had such power, or that reason and justice, which we expect in divine judgments, would have been wanting.

This power then to resist temptation or to suc-

cumb to it, to keep God's law or to break it, being a characteristic of the nature given to Adam at first, that same characteristic would necessarily have been transmitted to his descendents, and we have now to ask, by what means were the next and succeeding generations to be protected from the snares of that "old serpent called the Devil and Satan" which the first man was unable to resist, *and we shall get no answer*. Innocency was no safeguard, we have learned from the story of Adam himself, and as with the growth of the world in age and population temptations would be more likely to increase than to diminish, we may reasonably expect that sin, if not in the very next generation, in *some* time to come, would certainly have entered into the world. If the disease of Adam was to cling so closely to his descendents, it is somewhat remarkable that in the next generation, of two brothers, one was righteous (our Lord called him so) and the other a murderer.

But whatever effect Adam's transgression may have had on his immediate posterity, an event occurred among a later generation of his descendents which seems to have been intended to put an end to the wickedness of the race. This event was the deluge or flood in the days of Noah, the cause of which was, we are told, in this same story that man had become so bad and the earth was so filled with his violence that it repented the Lord that he had made him and the Lord said "I will destroy *man* whom I have created from the face of the earth." And man was destroyed, every man "in whose nostrils was the breath of life * * *

died" and Noah only remained alive "with his wife and his sons and his sons' wives" and of them, continues the account, "*was the whole earth overspread.*"

Thus, according to this account, the human race, as at present constituted, derives its origin not from Adam, but from Noah. It may be said that this is begging the question and that Noah, coming of the line of Adam, necessarily perpetuated the sinful strain; but there was a difference: "Noah was a just man and perfect" and he "walked with God." He was a preacher of righteousness and presumably had a righteous family. Now, without relying too much upon this "righteousness", we cannot read the story of the deluge otherwise than as the story of an attempt on God's part to establish the human race on a new foundation with a new head and with the earth freed from the curse imposed upon it in the time of Adam. Josephus, who wrote not very long after our Saviour's time and who was well qualified to speak on any matter of Jewish history or belief, speaking of this event says "God determined to destroy the whole race of mankind and to make *another* race that should be pure from wickedness."

Now, according to the book of Genesis, the first part of God's declared purpose was carried out. The wicked were all destroyed. After their total annihilation, God blessed Noah and took the curse from off the earth, Noah becoming, since Adam, the first husbandman tilling a God-blessed soil. God then made a solemn covenant with man represented by Noah and gave him commandments

to observe; and as he is said to have given him at first, so he gave him now, dominion over every other living creature.

Thus began the age of the post-diluvian patriarchs. If this was not a new beginning of the race, if only the ground was freed from the curse and man's supposed burden, inherited from Adam, still remained, it does not appear from the record in the case that there was adequate reason for, or result from, the Noahchian deluge.

CHAPTER VII.

“THE SON SHALL NOT BEAR THE INIQUITY OF
THE FATHER.” *Ezek. xviii, 20.*

“EVERY ONE SHALL DIE FOR HIS OWN
INIQUITY.” *Jer. xxxi, 30.*

NOW, whether this account we have been reviewing of God's dealings with the human race in the infancy of the world be authentic history, and it must always be remembered that it professes to relate events, the scene of which and the actors in which and all records of them, if there were any, had disappeared long ages before it was written; or whether it be an inspired or human allegory, Christian doctrines have been built upon it and it cannot be disregarded.

The account we are speaking of ended with the deluge. With the clearing away of the waters, a second period commenced, an era of new opportunity for man and of hopeful expectation for his Maker. But man failed to profit by the opportunity afforded him and the second period came to an end under the saddest of circumstances. No improvement apparently took place in the race, and post-diluvian man proved no better than his antediluvian predecessor; he was, if anything, worse.

The trait of bad behavior which man thus displayed may have been inherited from his forefathers; but not necessarily because a remote ancestor had disobeyed a commandment, but rather because he inherited from them, as a glorious birth-right the same liberty of will! the same power to choose the good and reject the evil; the same power to choose the evil and reject the good: as was said later "I have set before thee life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore *choose*." Without this gift man would not be the wonderful creature that he is; he would not be the image of God; he would not be the *responsible* being his Maker intended him to be. But, having it, and evil ways being oftener than not the readier means to his ends, in the absence of some restraining influence it is not remarkable that evil means were more often chosen than good ones. The formation of character is largely a matter of environment, and the most potent factor is no doubt heredity. The babe is physically the image of his sire and in character, as it develops, he resembles those who have gone before him but with the modifying influence of other environment. The Mosaic Law which limited the consequences of sin to four generations is sometimes thought harsh and unreasonable, but what is to be said of a law which would fasten upon a present generation the sin of an ancestor hundreds of generations removed? and how shall we reconcile with it the word of the Lord, which came to Ezekiel, concerning the son of the wicked who seeth all his father's sins and considereth and doeth not such like? Of such it was

said "He shall *not* die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live." It may be affirmed with confidence that no heart, or head or knee, was ever yet bowed sincerely from a consciousness of bearing the weight of Adam's sin and the infliction of it upon the whole human race is repugnant to reason and to sense.

The Lord Jesus Christ was "born of a pure virgin" not that he might escape the taint of this sin; but because he was the Son of the Most High and a human father was not possible for him. The virgin birth of our Lord would not have saved him from it, if it had been the real thing we are told it is, for it could have come to him as well through a human mother as through a human father. This is so obvious that to avoid a dilemma it became necessary to *invent* another doctrine: the doctrine that the Blessed Virgin, the mother of our Lord, was herself born with a nature different from that of other women.

A word must now be said concerning that adjunct to the doctrine of inherited sin which declares that physical death is also a consequence of Adam's transgression. If this interpretation of the sentence passed upon Adam be insisted upon, it must then be declared that our Lord did not in his own person overcome what we call death, for he suffered it; neither did he abolish death for the rest of us, for man is as subject to it to-day as he was thousands of years ago.

The idea that bodily death, as something not contemplated by God at creation, came into the world because of Adam's sin is contrary to every

analogy in nature and little thought is required to convince anyone, who cares to think, that a condition of eternal life on this planet would be utterly impracticable as man is constituted. Our Lord declared that man's final habitation was prepared for him *before* the foundations of the earth were laid and therefore *not* on the earth, but elsewhere. Wherever that habitation may be, by what means can we conceive of man entering into it if not through the grave and gate of death?

But to be more particular, we must go again to the account given in the Book of Genesis. The commandment given to Adam was plain and explicit: Thou shalt not do such and such a thing for "in the day thou doest it thou shalt surely die." Now Adam did that which he was expressly commanded not to do, yet he did not die in the day of his transgression, but lived to see many generations of his descendents. Evidently, therefore, it was not Adam's bodily existence that was threatened with immediate extinction, but something else. The sentence was, and there is nothing to show that it was unlimited, "Unto dust *thou* shalt return," and it meant that that part of him which was spiritual had ceased to exist. Adam had made his choice between obeying God and ministering to his own desires, with the result that at his dissolution his body was in the order of nature doomed to return to the dust as dust, without the hope of a joyful resurrection.

This is a plain statement of the first prediction of death; but did the matter end there? was there no second opportunity given to Adam? It is gen-

erally considered that there was, and, although it has nothing to do with our present purpose, it will be interesting to refer to it to show how little difference there is between him who died yesterday and the reputed first created man. Adam was not left long without hope, and a way was provided for escaping the extreme penalty. God, who willeth not that any man should die, so willed with the first man, who according to the story was made aware of the Saviour who later was to come into the world, and Adam, who we must conceive to have known by this time whom to believe, believed and so, by faith, preserved his spiritual existence from destruction. The first sinner thus became the first saved, and the grave was thus early robbed of victory, through faith in the Saviour.

The punishment with which Adam was threatened and from which he was saved was death of the soul, the same punishment with which the sinner of to-day is threatened and from which the same Saviour saves him. "The soul that sinneth it shall die" said Ezekiel. "Fear not them which kill the body" said our Saviour "but are not able to kill the soul."

CHAPTER VIII.

"I WILL GIVE THEE FOR A COVENANT OF THE
PEOPLE, FOR A LIGHT OF THE GENTILES".

Is. xlii, 6.

IT was not for any "constructive" sin that a whole generation was destroyed in the days of Noah; but for its actual wickedness. This we are plainly told. And it was no "constructive" sin of which the descendents of Noah, when grown to be many nations, were guilty; but sin of a very personal and pronounced type. God, at this time, was confronted with a new condition. By the terms of his covenant with Noah, he was debarred from again destroying all flesh from off the earth, and so another method of dealing with sinful man was devised.

With the terrible power of choosing good or choosing evil, man was left to his own devices, and God suffered him to walk in his own ways. *It was at this time then, and not in the days of Adam,* that the world became a LOST world, being for the first time utterly without God and without hope. Thenceforward spiritual darkness covered the earth and gross darkness the people. "This was as the waters of Noah unto me" said the Lord, by

the mouth of Isaiah. Severe as a punishment it certainly was and as overwhelming as the flood.

God in this was not unmindful of his covenant; but man's contempt for it brought about the estrangement. The covenant, however, was definitely broken, and before it could be reinstated a reconciliation would have to be made between man and his Maker.

When and in what manner this reconciliation was to be effected was known at this time to God alone; but the period for which this estrangement was to continue during which the nations of the earth were to be left without direct divine guidance or companionship was not, we may reasonably suppose, a certain number of years, but a period to be determined by the fulfilment of certain conditions. God purposed, however, that when these conditions were fulfilled, when the fulness of time should come, a year that should be ACCEPTABLE to him, a WAY would be provided for the restoration of the whole human race to its place in his household again.

As a first step to the attainment of this end he chose, as he had in the days of Noah, one man, to be the founder and head of a new race, a peculiar people, a people whose high duty and great privilege it was to be to preserve in the midst of the darkness, corruption and idolatry of surrounding nations, the knowledge of the ONE TRUE GOD. With this man God made, as he had with Noah, a solemn covenant concerning, not one people only, but the whole human race. Among many gracious promises in which the whole world to-day is in-

terested, was one that in this man's seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, a promise which we now know referred specifically to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messenger of the NEW COVENANT.

It is not out of place here to draw attention to the fact that all of God's dispensations or methods of dealing with his children at different periods have had one characteristic in common, namely the selection of one certain man to be the head of a *new race*. Their names are: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jesus. We have dealt with the first two and are now dealing with Abraham. This man, so greatly honored, was, we may believe, a veritable personage, whose descendents, intermixed to a very small degree perhaps with alien blood, are at this day to be found in every great city of the world; living witnesses of the truth of that Gospel they deny. With this man began the history of that race which was destined to have for two thousand years a career as wonderful and unexampled as it was romantic—a career which is not yet ended.

It is not necessary to recall the wanderings of this Hebrew prince and his family, what time they "went to and fro from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people"; to review the long sojourn in the chrysalis Egypt, from which his descendents, 400 years afterwards, emerged under the leadership of Moses a nation of 600,000 grown men with a code of laws derived from God himself, nor the manner in which their final settlement was effected in the promised land; but we must note that with the setting apart of Abraham, the founda-

tion was laid of a wall of partition intended to divide the people of the earth into two distinct bodies, the Hebrews constituting one and the rest of the world, afterwards indifferently called Gentile or heathen, the other.

It was into a world so divided, one part living in intimate and covenant relationship with Almighty God, and the other part ignorant both of him and of the gracious promise of which it was the subject that, some twenty centuries after the promise was made, the Saviour, the promised one, came "to be a light to lighten the Gentiles *and the Glory of Israel*".

CHAPTER IX.

“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”

John viii, 12.

“TO be a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Israel.” In these words the just and devout Israelite who uttered them makes a distinction between our Lord’s relation to his own people and his relation to the Gentiles. The order in which these are mentioned, too, is significant, and it can only with difficulty be conceived of an Israelite observing such an order, unless acting under the direction of a higher power, but it was an eminently proper one, although neither the aged Simeon himself, nor those who heard him, may have realized it. In order of time, our Lord’s Mission *was* first to Israel; but in order of *importance*, it was undeniably first to the Gentiles. “His great work” was to be the salvation of mankind, the greater part of which was Gentile. It was the Gentile world walking in darkness and sitting in the land of the shadow of death upon whom the great light was to shine, and Israel was designed to be but little more than a candlestick or bearer of this light.

The work our Lord had to do for the Jewish

nation was essentially different from that which the Gentile world needed. The Jewish law, which had never been imposed upon the rest of the world, had to be fulfilled before the Kingdom of Heaven could be opened to the Gentiles who were both innocent and ignorant of the particular sins of which the Jews were guilty. In the language of the market place, it may be said, that before a new organization could be formed on a solvent foundation, the obligations of the old one had to be discharged. There was no Spiritual Bankruptcy Court to appeal to; but ONE there was, able to give a full release for the debts of the nation, as, indeed, at last, he did, but at the expense of the debtors' everlasting shame.

Moreover, at the time of our Lord's birth the "expectation" of the Jews and the "desire of the nations" were not the same. The Jews were in expectation of the advent of a divine personage with whose characteristics and purposes they had been made acquainted by a line of prophets through a long series of years. The desire of "the nations" ignorant of the existence of the ONLY God and of the gracious promise to which they were heirs showed a reaching out for immortality, but, with no revelation to guide them, a blind and uninstructed one. The expectation of the Jews was true HOPE; expectancy and desire united; the desire of the nations if we except the faith of that grand old Gentile Job, was characterized by a blank despair.

ISRAEL, always in covenant relationship with God, had to be *redeemed* from all his sins; the GENTILE WORLD *to be reinstated in a covenant*

relationship from which it had been cut off for two thousand years. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel" sang Zacharias "for he hath visited and redeemed *his* people". *His* people were, of course, the Jewish nation and none else. To them knowledge of salvation was to be given "*by the remission of their sins*". Nothing is said of the sins of the Gentiles; but to them the "dayspring from on high" is promised for their ENLIGHTENMENT. Said the angel who appeared to Joseph, "It is he that shall save *his* people from their sins".

But however it came to the Gentiles, salvation "was to be by way of the Jews". There were two ways by which it could come to them. One way was by their reception into an organization, primarily Jewish, but designed to embrace both Jew and Gentile, ("Rejoice ye Gentiles *with* his people" sang Moses) and the other was, as actually happened, by their succeeding to the inheritance of the Jews, becoming sole instead of joint heirs to the promise of a *new* covenant; realizing directly, instead of through a secondary channel, those promises which had been made for their benefit to the Gentile Abram and of which his descendents may be considered to have been the trustees. Now whether it came to them directly or indirectly, there was but ONE messenger of the covenant and his commission was undoubtedly to the Jews, and in his ministrations he never lost sight of this fact! Had our Lord's mission been to the Gentiles, his proper birthplace would have been in Greece or Rome. If his fate was to be crucified, the Greeks or Romans would have been equal to the necessity.

Socrates, 400 years before the birth of our Lord, said if such a JUST person as he described were to appear on earth, the people would certainly crucify him. Had our Lord treated Jew and Gentile alike, confusion as to the purpose of his visitation must of necessity have ensued; but he did not. "Other sheep I have" said he "which are not of this fold * * they shall hear my voice". But they were not to hear it then. To these other sheep he never went himself. When approached for help by a Gentile woman, he said "I WAS NOT SENT BUT UNTO THE LOST SHEEP OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL." And, although this was said primarily to test the woman's faith, it was none the less an important truth. When our Lord sent forth the twelve disciples, their general instructions were prefaced by the command "Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not", and later, when the seventy were sent forth they were likewise commanded.

The sermon on the mount, like all the other discourses of our Lord, was addressed to Jews and was for *their* instruction. It was an exposition of the Jewish LAW as it was to be construed under the personal government of the Messiah, an exposition of the spirit of that law which a strict observance of its letter had caused to be obscured for so long. This exposition was not intended primarily for the instruction of the members of a new organization, but was for those belonging to an already existing one which our Lord's teaching was to reform and purify. That prayer, which was

part of the sermon on the mount, and which Christians call the Lord's Prayer, is also essentially Jewish and lacks the prime essential of a Christian prayer.

The full meaning of the teaching from the Mount of the BEATITUDES could not have been understood by those to whom the teaching from the Mount of the LAW was unknown; nor was it necessary that it should be. The gospel or "good news" the Gentiles were to hear by the mouth of the first apostles was the same nineteen hundred years ago as that with which the Christian missionary of to-day is charged: the proclamation "By Authority" of the IMMORTALIZATION of the HUMAN RACE. Charged with a message like this, it was not necessary then, nor is it necessary now, to mention the Law, which had been abolished, nor the prophets, of whom the Gentiles knew little, nor redemption and ransom, of which they knew less.

But before we can understand Christianity it is essential that we realize the difference between our Lord's work for his people that were and for his people that were to be. "*When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death*" sang Ambrose "*thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers*".

It must be evident to anyone who reflects, that the only immediate beneficiaries of the sacrifice offered up on the Altar of the Cross were those pious Hebrews who lived and died between the time of Abraham and the moment of the offering up of the sacrifice on Mount Calvary, in the certain faith of the fulfilment of the promise made to

Abraham, that is, through faith in a Saviour known to them as the Messiah, who is known to us as Jesus the Christ. Certainly those Gentiles who had lived and died during the same period, during those, to them, dark ages, illuminated by no light divine, who were as unaware of the need of a Saviour, as they were of the promise of one, could hardly be considered as participants; or there would have been no difference between Jew and Gentile. If the heathen world as then constituted was amenable to *any* law of God, it was not cut off from all communion with him. If it was not amenable to any law of God, it never transgressed any, and so was in an entirely different position from that of the chosen people; indeed, it is not possible to discern any means whereby the heathen of this period or of those periods which had gone before could have availed themselves of the benefits of the sacrifice of the cross. Certainly again, those who failing to see the great difference between the positions of the Jew and the Gentile, take upon themselves the sins of which the Jewish nation alone was guilty do so gratuitously and unasked.

Among these Gentiles there were doubtless many *uncovenanted* servants of God, and even inspired ones; Balaam and the author of the Book of Job were undoubtedly inspired, and God did not disdain to call the founder of the Persian empire "my servant", but what his manner of dealing with the vast majority was, we know not, any more than we know the fate of those unconverted Gentiles who have lived and died since the day of Calvary or

those still living. To put the matter in a brief sentence; The benefit of the sacrifice of Jesus was, for the Gentiles, altogether PROSPECTIVE; for the Jews it was altogether RETROSPECTIVE. For them Jesus was a Ransom, a Sacrifice, a Redeemer, the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, their Messiah, their King, the Corner Stone of a mighty fabric by them rejected. For us he is a Saviour, a Mediator, our Prophet, our great High Priest, our living reigning King, the Good Shepherd, the Teacher, our Advocate, the Head of the Church, the Light of the World, the Prince of Peace.

CHAPTER X.

“THEN SAID I: ‘LO, I COME WITH THE ROLL OF
THE BOOK WHICH IS WRITTEN CONCERN-
ING ME.’ ” *Ps. xl, 7.*

“NOW SPEAKEST THOU PLAINLY”.

John xvi, 29.

WE have considered the story of our Lord’s mission as told by himself, in the form of a parable; but the Lord Jesus did not always speak in parables, and we may now direct our attention to another explanation of his mission told by himself, at an earlier date in plain, undisguised speech. The first account was intended for the benefit of “the Chief Priests and the Scribes and Pharisees”, while that which we are now coming to was for the people at large.

These are the words in which the Lord Jesus declared the work he came to do:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath *anointed me* to preach good tidings to the poor.

“He hath *sent me* to heal the broken-hearted;

“To *preach* deliverance to the captive and recovering of sight to the blind;

“To set at liberty them that are bruised;

“To preach the ACCEPTABLE YEAR of the Lord.”

The occasion of this declaration is related by the evangelist Luke. The Lord Jesus had come one Sabbath Day to the city among the hills, where he had been brought up, and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue and taking part in the public worship stood up to read; and when the roll of the book was handed to him he found the place where the words quoted were written. They are easily recognizable as the opening verses of the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. When he had read them, he sat down according to the custom of Jewish teachers when giving instruction and the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened upon him. Never before had congregation listened to such a remarkable exposition of any passage of scripture as followed, nor ever has it since. "THIS DAY" said Jesus "is this scripture fulfilled in your ears", signifying that it was he, Jesus the carpenter, his auditors' fellow-townsmen, whom they all knew and to whom they were listening, of whom the prophet Isaiah had spoken 700 years before as the one anointed to preach the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven and to proclaim the arrival of the year *acceptable* to the Lord for the admission of the Gentiles into fellowship in the Church and the re-establishment of the covenant relationship between God and all the peoples of the earth severed in the time of Abraham, when "all flesh" and not one nation alone was to see the salvation of God. Well may our Lord have said: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad".

But the prophet was in his own country and his

gracious words were not believed. Both he and his message were there and then rejected and there was none to do him honor. He may have expected this or, at least, have been in doubt as to the manner in which his announcement would be received, for there is much significance in our Lord's leaving what he did *unread*. Had he not closed the book when he did, he would have read words prophetic, not of his rejection, but of his acceptance as the expected Messiah. That congregation would have learned that the time had arrived when it was within the power of their nation to cease from being a nation of vine-dressers and feeders of flocks and to become a nation of priests, blessed by the Lord, chosen of him to carry the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven to all people and into all lands.

But he stopped short of this. It may not have been clear to him that all the prophecy *was* to be fulfilled, that the nation would have the wisdom to seize upon the opportunity offered it; that the prophet "clothed with the garments of SALVATION and covered with the robe of RIGHTEOUSNESS" would be received in a manner that would make fulfilment possible, but he read enough to make clear the announcement that the time at least had arrived for setting up on earth the Kingdom of Heaven. And this, it had been foretold, was to be set up, not by means of a tragedy, a revolution, or even by an army composed of legions of angels, but in a natural order "as the earth bringeth forth her bud and the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth". This kingdom was to be set up in Jerusalem and the Messiah was

to be its ruler. From Jerusalem was to go forth to the ends of the earth an army of preachers. One hundred and twenty thousand priests it has been computed were available in Judea at this time to carry the "gospel of peace" to all nations. Did the Psalmist have in his mind this time, one wonders, or some other, when he prophesied "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it"? or Isaiah when he said:

"How beautiful upon the mountains
Are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,
that publisheth peace;
That bringeth good tidings of good, that publish-
eth salvation;
That saith unto Zion *Thy God reigneth*"!

But some 500 years before David and 750 before Isaiah prophesied, the setting up of this kingdom had taken a very concrete shape and become the subject of a solemn compact between God and his people, attested on behalf of both parties and put into writing by Moses, the terms of God's part in it reading:

"If ye will attentively hearken to my voice and keep
my covenant,
You will become to me a choice possession beyond
all people
Though the whole earth is mine;
Yea you will become unto me a KINGDOM of
PRIESTS."

Over this kingdom of priests, a PRIEST KING was needed to reign, of whom Melchizedek, king

and priest of the Most High God, who, bearing bread and wine, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, was the type, "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made", says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "like unto the Son of God". But unlike his mysterious type, who came we know not whence and disappeared, as mysteriously as he came, we know not whither, we know of the Lord Jesus Christ, both whence he was and whither he went.

Of the approach of this kingdom, John, the last of the Hebrew prophets, after a silence of 400 years, was the herald; when "John was delivered up" Jesus himself took up the cry of the Baptist and the twelve and the seventy were then both very emphatically charged to proclaim it, and even to those who would not receive them and the dust of whose cities they were bade to shake off from their feet, these were commanded to say "Notwithstanding be ye sure of this, the Kingdom of Heaven is come nigh unto you".

But the proclamation was unheeded. The golden opportunity, never to be offered to them again, was neglected: in rejecting the preacher of righteousness, they rejected the *kingdom* of righteousness. Spiritual pride became the ruin of the nation and prevented the leaders of Jewish society from recognizing and acknowledging their Messiah when he was among them. "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" they asked with scorn. "When the Messiah comes", they no doubt thought, "when

the Messiah comes to set up a kingdom", in which they expected to be the prominent figures, "when he comes he will not go to the common people first; *he* will present his credentials to the properly constituted guardians of the knowledge of God, the conservators of the truth, the monopolists of religion. This 'fellow', who evidently doesn't know the distinctions of society, who consorts with sinners and calls the spiritual rulers of the people hypocrites, can never be the man ordained from of old to drive out our hateful oppressors and set up a kingdom of his own." And so the kingdom of which prophets had foretold and poets had sung was *not* set up. The "acceptable year" for the purpose was preached throughout the length and breadth of Judea, but it passed unheeded, by. The MESSENGER of the COVENANT talked to ears that would not hear; the bearer of the nation's pardon was despised and rejected; the long expected heir was denied his inheritance; the Son did not receive from the husbandmen the overdue tribute. Hailed he was "*King of the Jews*", but in mockery and derision; the emblems of royalty were accorded him in a like spirit; the royal robe, the crown, the sceptre and the throne—the throne of the cross. But this was the hour of his enemies—"the power of darkness" ruled and so the Lord of Life was put to death; the Light of the Gentiles was by Gentiles crucified, the Glory of Israel was by Israelites put to shame. It was not the degradation of the cross, which he, for the joy that was set before him, despised, not the nails, not the thorns, not the derisive jeers of his enemies, nor

the desertion of his friends and kinsmen, which made applicable the words of the prophet, "Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow"; but the ignominious ending of the most glorious mission ever undertaken, in preparation for which two thousand years had been spent in vain.

CHAPTER XI.

“THESE BE THE DAYS OF VENGEANCE”.

Luke xxi, 22.

HERE the story ends. The sequel is only, in degree, less tragic. Profane history, silent about the great things of which the gospel tells, now has all to say, and sacred history keeps silence. It may be read with much detail in the pages of the eye-witness Josephus, the historian Tacitus, and seen pictured to-day at Rome in the stone of Domitian. The Lord of the Vineyard came, as threatened, and destroyed those wicked husbandmen with a terrible destruction. The vineyard was taken from them and given to others. The Kingdom of God became the inheritance of the Gentiles. The fifteen-hundred-year-old threat “If ye will not be reformed by me * * I will bring a sword upon you that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant” was executed. The sword was the sword of Rome and its execution was done in the year of our Lord 70. Rome not yet founded, and the walls of Jerusalem yet to be built, were both within the vision of that prophet of whom it is said the Lord spake not in “dark sayings”, but mouth to mouth. His prophetic foresight enabled him to see and

describe with a vividness not more than equalled by those who, 1500 years later, were actual spectators of the desolation wrought, the awful events which were to take place and the agency by which they were to be accomplished. "The Lord" said Moses "shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth, whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old nor show favor to the young; * * and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down."

At this time the abomination spoken of by Daniel the prophet stood in the holy place and all the prophecies concerning the fate of Jerusalem came to a focus and that great tribulation, prophesied by our Lord, such as was not since the beginning of the world, came upon it. Of the holy temple, the noblest building of all time, which even its captors, for the sake of its beauty, desired to spare, not one stone, as our Lord also foretold, was left upon another, and the holy city became an uninhabitable ruin, bearing witness to the world forever that all things prophesied, concerning her, were either accomplished or never were to be. Caught like rats in a trap, the Christians, remembering the words of the Lord, being absent from the city, the Jews were slain with the sword, and those, unfit for slavery, who escaped the sword met the same death they had meted out to their King. As they had said, so was it done unto them, "His blood be upon our heads and upon our children's." On the road to Calvary Jesus was fol-

lowed by many weeping women to whom he turned and said "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children", knowing that many yet unborn would pay a heavy price for that day's wretched work.

Does this terrible vengeance unparalleled in all history suggest that those things which had been done in Jerusalem had been foreordained of God? Is it possible to conceive of a JUST BEING compelling men to commit an act of great atrocity and then punishing them for committing it?

CHAPTER XII.

“BECAUSE I LIVE YE SHALL LIVE ALSO.”

John xiv, 19.

IN giving up their king to the Gentiles to be crucified, the Jews had done their worst. They had caused the MESSENGER of THE NEW COVENANT to be put to death; but they were powerless to avert the establishment of the covenant he came to inaugurate. Although, as a nation, the Jews had failed to take advantage of the occasion for which they had been prepared God's patience was not exhausted but his hand was stretched out still and the individuals of the nation were admitted to participation on equal terms with the Gentiles in the privileges which the nation had so determinedly rejected, and a respite of nearly 40 years was granted before the great day of his wrath came upon their city and nation.

In the intervening period between the crucifixion and the destruction of Jerusalem, the city became the centre from which Christianity has radiated to the circumference of the earth. The chosen witnesses of the resurrection had been commanded to declare that event first in Jerusalem, afterwards in Judea generally, and then in that strange semi-Judean country, Samaria.

Thus the Christian Church had its beginning.

Not at first were Christians so called, nor at Jerusalem. The first disciples were Jews, but they necessarily worshipped apart from their orthodox brethren, and so were called a sect—a sect, as the Jews in Rome said, that was “everywhere spoken against”, of course by the orthodox. It was not till after the destruction of Jerusalem that converts gave up all Jewish ceremonial.

The message which the chosen witnesses were charged to proclaim “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth” as a fundamental doctrine of a universal religion, was the Resurrection of Jesus, as an earnest of the resurrection of all believers to a new and endless life, to an IMMORTALITY resting not on the deductions of philosophers, nor on the inborn instinct or desire of the creature; but on the authority of one no less than the Son of God; himself to be “the first fruits of them that slept.”

Other men at various times have appeared on earth with Missions to fulfil and charged with Messages of great importance to the race. Prophets had brought messages from God to man “since the world began”, but these spake darkly, because they understood darkly, not knowing, themselves, the full meaning of their messages; but when the greatest revelation of all was to be made, no mere man was fitted for its declaration, and God’s own Son, furnished with proofs of his authority and evidence of his power, was charged with it.

This resurrection truth was the gospel or “good news” first preached by the apostles, “the resur-

rection of the body" made true and good by the resurrection of Christ's body. The immortality of the soul, as an abstract question, was not new. It had been discussed for centuries by both Jew and Gentile. The story of the coming down of God from heaven would hardly have seemed marvellous to either Greek or Roman, for it was a part of their everyday belief that their gods often visited the earth and assumed human forms; at one time, indeed, Paul and Barnabas with difficulty restrained the people of Lystra from offering sacrifice to them as gods; but that One, crucified, dead and buried, after lying three days in the grave, had risen from that grave in verification of a promise of a similar resurrection to all who should believe in him, was something, indeed, to enlist the admiration of a world. The long silence of the tomb was broken, and the voice which came from it said "I AM the RESURRECTION and the LIFE; he that believeth on me shall never die."

CHAPTER XIII.

“I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL
FLESH.”

Joel ii, 28.

CHRISTIANITY is not a theory nor a science, not a system of ethics or of morality; it is a series of facts. The incarnation is one, the resurrection is another; then followed a third event in the chain of God's goodness, without which the other two might have remained void of significance forever, and that was the coming of God in the person of the HOLY GHOST to dwell with man, not for *a* time, but to the *end* of time. Without the occurrence of this event, we should not *certainly* know the truth of the other two, or, indeed, be positively assured of anything more than our senses could teach us of God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost.

The birth of the Lord Jesus established a new era; the advent of the Holy Ghost created a new race, a glorified humanity. The progressive animal, man, had at this time, with God's gracious assistance, raised himself up to an intellectual level beyond which further progress in that direction was not possible, and the time had arrived for him to be entrusted with greater privileges and a more

extended power. The divine or spiritual side of his nature was now to be taken in hand and developed as it never had been. Like the resurrection witnessed by Ezekiel in the valley of desolation, a new life was to be breathed into the dry bones of humanity. Created in the image of God, man was now to receive the Spirit of God; not as the prophets of old had received it, by a *special* grant, but by virtue of a *general* covenanted *right*, promised by the mouth of the holy prophets and confirmed by the divine Messenger himself. Since the time of our Lord, man has shown no intellectual progress whatever. The intelligence, the genius, the wisdom and the wit of the men of Greece and Rome have not since been surpassed; but since the appearance of that divine light which Christianity has shed upon mankind, there has been a progress of another sort—a spiritual advance—which has been felt throughout the world.

The presence of the Holy Spirit distinguishes Christianity from every other religious system which has ever existed. The founders of other religions came and went, and whatever good they were capable of doing by personal direction ended with their lives. But the departure of the Lord Jesus left not his children orphans, nor his Church without a guide. By the advent of the Holy Spirit the Christian Church obtained power to become the religion of humanity and to make of one kin all the nations of the earth, for the Holy Spirit is able to occupy the whole world and has, from the time of the apostles, inspired men to explore its utmost limits to spread the good news of God.

All other religions have had geographical or political limitations, but the religion of Christ is bounded by neither sea nor land.

"My Kingdom", said Jesus, "is not of this world," and, truly, it is not: it is in the world, but not of it. Its members matriculate here, but are graduated in another world; they are scattered throughout the earth and form an organization within, but independent of, every earthly government. The Kingdom of God has neither army nor navy, and sends no ambassador to represent it at any earthly court, yet it is the most powerful of all kingdoms, and against it even hell is powerless.

With the advent of the Holy Spirit, our Lord's direct work on earth came to an end. Recalling his work as recorded in the Holy Gospel, we are reminded that, from the time of his boyhood-days, when with boyish eagerness he was impatient to be about his Father's business, to that moment, when with his expiring breath he said "It is finished", his work had been altogether for the Jews. But now "all things concerning him" foretold by Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms were fulfilled. The Messenger of the Covenant had delivered his message. The Messiah had come to be the Jews' anointed king, to save them from their enemies and to deliver them from the hands of them that hated them. But they cared not for his message and they refused him for their king. Instead, they offered him up, unknowingly, but not less truly, as an expiatory SACRIFICE for the sins of *their nation*.

The door was now open for the admission of

the Gentiles into *covenant relationship* with God, and they who had never known him were to know him now through the HOLY SPIRIT, by whom they were to be taught concerning sin and righteousness and judgment—nothing, apparently about ransom, redemption or atonement, at least atonement as theologically explained. Atonement and reconciliation are almost interchangeable terms and the meaning of both, *to the Gentiles*, was that they and their Maker were again in a state of being at-one—at-one-ment.

CHAPTER XIV.

“THE LORD WHOM YE SEEK SHALL SUDDENLY
COME TO HIS TEMPLE, EVEN THE MESSENGER
OF THE COVENANT.” *Mal. iii, 1.*

RECOGNIZED relationship between man and God, we have seen, has always been one of covenant. To a covenant there must be two parties, and there must also be a conditional promise on the part of one and an acceptance of it on the part of the other. The substance of God's promises has always been the same—long life—even for ever and ever. Acceptance of the condition seems at first to have been understood or to have been signified by one in the name of many; but afterwards acceptance was required to be acknowledged by each individual. The first covenant, according to the Mosaic account, was made with the first man. The condition was obedience. This condition was disregarded and the covenant was broken, but God's promise was renewed afterwards in a different form. No further change took place in the mutual relation, apparently, until the time of Noah. After the deluge, another covenant was made, but man showed so great a contempt for this that God withdrew the light of his countenance from the nations

generally and made a covenant with Abraham, from participation in which all but Abraham and his family were excluded. To this covenant a sign or seal was prescribed. This covenant was never intended to be permanent, and a new one was promised to the seed of Abraham, but when the Messenger of it came, he was rejected and the fulfilment of the promise was lost to them. It was to this promise, then, that the Gentile world succeeded, and they became his people which were not his people and she beloved which was not beloved. The messenger of the covenant was found of them that sought him not. He was made manifest to them that asked not after him, "The people walking in darkness and sitting in the shadow of death beheld a GREAT LIGHT." In a word, the Gentiles, who were excluded from the covenant with Abraham, inherited the promise of the new covenant, from which the descendents of Abraham, as such, were now excluded. The sign or seal of the new covenant is baptism. The personal promises of our Lord to those who come to him have been referred to; but it necessarily follows that those who come to him must make their approach in the manner he has ordained. This approach is by baptism alone, and nothing can be more explicit than the words in which our Lord states this. "He that believeth and *is baptized* shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be condemned." "Shall be saved"! From what? and by what means? *From* death of the soul; from eternal condemnation; and *by* entering into a solemn personal covenant with his Maker, when the erstwhile child of the world becomes at

once the child of God, inheritor of the promised blessings and also of the responsibilities of his new condition.

It follows of necessity that one who enters into covenant relationship with another must observe the terms of the covenant, or it becomes void, and so it is with the covenanted right of immortality. To enable the Christian to do his part, strength is given him in that other ordinance of our Lord called the Lord's Supper, except ye partake of which, said he, "ye have no life in you", "for this," speaking of one of the elements, "is the BLOOD OF THE NEW COVENANT."

God forbid, if there cling to any new-born child the smallest particle of the sin of Adam, that it should not be washed away in Baptism; and God forbid that anyone who thinks his soul was ever clogged with such a weight should not be satisfied that Baptism removed it; but to dwell upon this as the end of the ordinance is to obscure its real significance, it being nothing short of a new birth, that new birth of which the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, without which none can enter into the kingdom of God. Every Christian *must have* two births: a birth into the household of his earthly parents and a birth into the household of his heavenly Father. It is commonly thought that he receives his family name at his first birth, and at his second birth a name only that will distinguish him from other members of the same family; but, as a matter of fact, it is only at his second birth that he becomes entitled to bear a family name, a name which is borne by the largest family on

earth, which is the same everywhere and in all languages.

Such is a bald statement of the Christian covenant which our Lord came down from heaven to inaugurate. The benefits which belong to it are revealed partly in the word of God and, partly, and perhaps more fully, although in a manner not easily to be described, direct to the heart of the believer through the operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby those who desire to do his will are permitted to KNOW of a doctrine, whether it be of God or not.

That one of the parties to the covenant sealed it with his blood is a matter of fact, but whether it was *ordained* so to be sealed and whether it was absolutely *necessary* that it should be so sealed, may be left to the decision of those who consider the matter from the testimony available.

There is an allegory, says Paul, concerning the old and the new covenants, contained in a piece of Old Testament history relating to Abraham and his two sons. One of these was his by Hagar the Egyptian, and the other by Sarah: one was the child of a bondwoman and the other of a free, and these two women, the apostle goes on to explain, are, allegorically, the two covenants, one the covenant of the law, *which tendeth to bondage*, and the other the covenant of that freedom *with which Christ did set us free*.

The old fable of the hare and the tortoise has been re-enacted. While the Jewish hare slept in confidence of the LAW, the heathen tortoise outstripped him with the certainty of the PROMISE.

CHAPTER XV.

“YOUR ADVERSARY THE DEVIL, AS A LION ROARING, GOES ABOUT SEEKING WHOM HE MAY SWALLOW UP.” *I Peter v, 8.*

ALTHOUGH all Christian doctrines necessarily radiate from the central fact of the incarnation, there are four things which stand out from it as the four cardinal points of the mariner's compass stand out from all the rest. These four things are: Faith, Sin, Repentance, Forgiveness.

The first of these is a subject too large to be treated here with any detail, but we may say with the irresistible logic of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “He who cometh to God must believe that he is.” This amount of faith, at least, must be insisted upon as a prerequisite to any benefit to be derived from the incarnation. Without a belief in the God of revelation, we can neither ask, nor expect to receive, anything at his hands. By faith alone we become acquainted with God; by faith alone is our relationship to him continued.

It has been noticed that the four dispensations at their beginning had one characteristic in common, and we have seen that the three dispensations which passed away had also one thing in common

which brought them to an end. This one thing was SIN—wickedness. The same thing threatens the disruption of the dispensation under which we now live. Let us try, therefore, to understand it.

We have already said much about that form of sin which is said to be hereditary, and so may omit further reference to it now. But, besides this, there is another theory of sin recognized by some who question the hereditary theory. These still consider sin a congenital disease, but not an inherited one, considering it instead as something belonging to the individual in his own right, a natural and congenital endowment belonging to every child of man. This is a very nice distinction, but unsatisfactory, as it leaves the individual in the same predicament, whichever theory he selects. The second theory also dishonors God by the implication that he either cannot make a perfect human being or that he chooses to make an imperfect one; sending the highest type of his creatures into the world with a blot upon it from which the lower types are free! Is it reasonable to suppose that God would so mar his own masterpiece?

John's definition of sin, which is essentially Jewish, is that it is "the transgression of the law", a definition good enough as long as there was a law to transgress; but under the Christian dispensation there is none. The law, which Paul says "was but a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" and "a shadow of good things to come" served its purpose and came to an end at that moment when the Saviour of Mankind cried out from the cross "It is finished". From that moment and forever ended

every jot and tittle of the law. *That generation did not pass away till all things were fulfilled that were to be fulfilled.*

If there be no law then, it may be asked, is it permissible "to steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely and burn incense unto Baal?" There can be, of course, but one answer. It was not *righteousness* that was abolished, but *statute* law, and this was not long abolished before God's promise to write his laws on men's hearts in place thereof was fulfilled. This was no fable, no figure of speech, but an actual reality which came to pass as promised. Under the new covenant, each subscriber to it is furnished with a personal counsellor whose office it is to admonish and convince concerning this particular thing—sin—who says to him at every turning "This is the way, walk ye in it". Whenever, therefore, a Christian does that which his Christian conscience, which is none other than the voice of the Holy Spirit, warns him it is wrong to do, he transgresses the common law of God as surely as one who contravenes a statute transgresses. With this understanding, we may allow the beloved disciple's definition to go unchallenged.

But before any law is transgressed there must come temptation. No rational, normal being ever commits sin without an object. And this object which, at the time, seems to be a thing to be desired, is the temptation to sin. When this comes, a contest takes place in the Christian's bosom. The Holy Spirit pleads, the Tempter allures and the will of the individual decides. The issue is no small

matter. It is a soul won for heaven or for hell. To gain the victory, the enemy of mankind arrays all the powers at his command, whether the soul fought for be that of a little child or of a full-grown man or woman. For every state and age there are temptations which he knows how to set before his desired victims in their most seductive form.

But to suffer temptation is not to sin. Count it all joy, says the apostle James, when ye fall into it. Never to have been tempted is to be inhuman. Without temptation, it has been said, there could be no virtue. "When thou hast *tried* me" said Job "I shall be as gold." Man can neither hide himself from temptation nor flee from it, for it follows him whithersoever he goes. It is in the fibre of his constitution; in the fibre of his body and in the fibre of his brain; every pulsation of his heart records a temptation and temptation ends only with the last pulsation. To this extent the man of to-day inherits the fault of the first man, whether that man was named Adam or was nameless, and so long as man inhabits this planet, under the present conditions, so long may he expect temptation to assail him. Well, indeed, is the petition "Lead us not into temptation", placed before that for deliverance from the Evil One.

This brings us to what appears to be the very essence of sin. The very essence of sin is NON-RESISTANCE TO TEMPTATION. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". Entertain him and you exclude the Holy Spirit. The two cannot dwell at one time in the same tabernacle. The first man mentioned in scripture sinned when he suc-

cumbed to temptation. Our Lord's victory over sin was in resisting temptation and it is this that makes him our GREAT EXEMPLAR. Had the Lord Jesus Christ yielded to the Tempter when he said "If thou be the Son of God command these stones to be made bread", he would not have been the Saviour of Mankind. It was not "the passers by" who said in his ear "If thou be the Son of God come down from the cross"; they were but the mouthpiece of the lurking Tempter whose last opportunity was fast disappearing. What more subtle temptation can we imagine than this: to come down from the cross, confound his enemies and establish his divinity? But not at the instigation of the Devil. The Saviour of Mankind was tempted, as we are, from the time of his baptism till his last moment on the cross, and he resisted to the end! In earlier days one who was intended to be a deliverer of the children of Israel, when betrayed and bound, in *his* last moments brought down the pillars of the house where he was held captive, working the same ruin to himself that he wrought upon his enemies. Had the man Jesus Christ not endured unto the end, we may conceive that the pillars of the world would have been shaken. Physical strength, we know, is the product of resistance. Resistance to the rigors of climate, to the perils of sea and land makes men physically strong and spiritual strength is gained by resistance to temptation in direct proportion to the strength and length of it.

All sin is primarily against God and secondarily against the soul of the sinner. No one does an

injury to another without doing one to himself. David, King of Israel, after committing a most atrocious crime, confessed to God "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil", and everyday law recognizes the same subordination of the interests of an individual wronged to the majesty of the Law which has been outraged, and the transgressor is charged, in the indictment, not with an offence against an individual, but with one against the peace and dignity of the King or Commonwealth. As typical of the injury the sinner does to himself, one may take the case of Cain and Abel. Abel was slain, but his soul was preserved; Cain lived on, but a murderer with a blot upon his soul which nothing could wipe out.

There is a question often asked, but seldom answered. Perhaps it hardly deserves an answer. It is the question of the unthinking ones: Why does God permit sin to exist? If it did not exist, man would not be man; being incapable of sinning, he might approximate more nearly to the angels, but man was made, for a purpose, a little lower than they, and his ability to sin, or in other words to do as seems to him good, is one of his characteristics. Deprived of this characteristic, he would not be the wonderful piece of work he is, the masterpiece among God's productions, "the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals". Of the planets it is said "He hath given them a law which shall not be broken", and although they in their daily motions "declare the glory of God", man with his power to break God's laws has the opportunity, whether he exercises it or not, to glorify him more.

Without sin in the world, the world would not be what it is nor what it was intended for. It would not be a breeding ground for saints, a place in which to train for eternity and wherein to show the stuff that is in us. God may look down from heaven upon the children of men and, seeing their waywardness and wickedness, their mad race for wealth and fame and power or the sensual pleasures of life, their desire for the things which are seen, to the neglect of the things which are eternal, and be sorry that he hath made man; but, having made him for a purpose, God will abide the result. Peradventure there had been ten righteous in a city once, it would have been saved from destruction, and who shall say that God may not be satisfied if a generation produces but ten subjects for his kingdom? Is it worth while trying to be one of the number?

“If any man sin”, “and there is no one who sinneth not”, “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous”, who, knowing his own and knowing also their temptations, says of the repentant ones “These are mine. Father, forgive them; I will be SPONSOR for their future conduct”. And He, who knoweth whereof we are made, who remembereth that we are but dust, forgives, as only he forgives, blotting out the misdeed and remembering the sin no more.

But our Advocate has only to ask! “The Father himself loveth us” and is more than willing to forgive; but there is no approach to him but by the Son. God delights not in punishment, although there are those who delight to hold him up as

glorying in it, as One indeed who would trip his children up on legal technicalities. But there is no evidence to bear this out or that he ever directly punishes. Punishment is generally a *consequence* of sin which the sinner brings upon himself and which forgiveness, even, cannot always avert or take away. When a parent warns a child against playing with fire, or it will be burned, and the child, not heeding the warning, plays with fire and is possibly burned to death, we do not say that the parent punished the child. He or she would possibly have given its life to save the child's life. So when God said "Eat not; for in that day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die," he was not necessarily imposing a punishment, but only warning against a fatal consequence, and the Unpardonable Sin was not made so by decree, but became so from the very nature of the sin itself.

CHAPTER XVI.

“LET US HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF THE
WHOLE MATTER”. *Eccl. xii, 13.*

WE have said that the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ was the greatest event in the history of the human race. It may now be said that there is no other event in history that is better authenticated. The wisest and best of every Christian age have firmly believed it; and no man of judicial mind can examine the evidence bearing upon it, at the present day, and remain unconvinced of its truth. If its product, Christianity, were abolished from the world, its influence would not be at an end, for the reason that it has made a permanent impress on the character of mankind.

There are two other remarkable facts concerning the truth of the Christian religion that are worthy of notice here. One is that, in spite of its many enemies, the testimony of the Holy Gospel has not been tampered with, and the other is that a better appreciation of our Lord's work is possible to-day, nineteen centuries after he accomplished it, than it was in his own time or in any other since.

It is not purposed to enlarge on the evidences of Christianity, for this subject has been exhaustively

treated by the greatest minds of different Christian ages; but it may be excusable, before leaving the subject of our Lord's Mission, to say a few words concerning the creature for whose benefit this wonderful work was undertaken, and of his present-day relation to the event of nineteen hundred years ago.

God has written two books: one we call, pre-eminently, The BOOK, the other NATURE. Both alike are open to man's questioning and understanding, but neither can be fully understood except by those who love them. Both alike reveal a MASTER HAND conducting a series of experiments with the subjects of his own creation, both declare the wisdom, power and love of that Master Hand and both, if intelligently questioned will return an intelligible reply. No other books have been more carefully read and studied than these, but the riches contained in them are still only partially developed. Of the two, the book of Nature may be said more truly to be written by the hand of God than the other. The other is the mind of God, but is written by the hand of man. The book of Nature agrees with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus in saying nothing of any Fall of Man. On the contrary, it indicates his steady and continuous progress throughout the ages of which it testifies. This book is read with eyes unprejudiced and with understandings upon which no restrictions are placed. Unfortunately, for reasons which need not be mentioned, the other book is not so read. To read it with the eyes of others and to understand it with the understanding of others only, is to make of an open book a sealed book and to nullify the

highest faculties which God has given us. For a proper understanding, however, of the better part of man—his spiritual nature—this book is the *only* text-book and authority.

That it is not always in agreement with the revelations of science, is unimportant. The revelations of science themselves are none other than indirect revelations from God. So we find the poetical idea that man “At once upstood intelligent, all creatures understood” although agreeable to the Mosaic account, is not in consonance with what we know of natural history. Moses “was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians” and the account of creation given in the Book of Genesis was no doubt that generally accepted by the learned at the time the author of the book wrote. If we were to compare a standard work on science of a hundred years ago with one written to-day, and note the errors in the former, we might look with lenience on the errors in a book written 4,000 years ago. The writings of Bacon and Newton, two master minds of the world, are, when examined by the light of the knowledge of to-day, found to contain much error.

Man, at the first, must have been of the earth, earthy. Generations possibly passed before he learned to observe intelligently, to express his thoughts with clearness, certainly before he could put them in a form which should give them permanence. Yet all his later-day capabilities and many more were within the possibility of possession by him when man first appeared on earth, or they could never have been developed in him. Human beings

may be compared to some objects of great beauty, but humble origin, existing in the lower kingdom. Unless that beauty, afterwards developed in the field flower, was latent in it, cultivation could not have brought it out. So the standard set for man when he was first formed of the dust of the earth was, we may reasonably conceive, no less than "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ".

With what pleasure and tender care may we not imagine the Great Husbandman to have watched the development of the powers of his most wonderful creation; and how often must he, like an earthly parent, have held out his hands to encourage and steady the weak footsteps of his children. But *they* knew not who their Father was. Then he revealed himself to them out of the desert land and the waste howling wilderness, he led them, he *instructed* them. The earliest revelation that concerns us of to-day, is that to Abram. The earlier revelations, such as those to Adam and Noah, were not recorded, as far as we know, till 500 years after Abram's call. After the call of Abram, God hid himself from the larger part of mankind, but even then "he left not himself without witness in that he did good", remembering his promise that day and night, seed-time and harvest should never depart from the earth. These two thousand sad years were to him but a moment; "In a little wrath" he said "I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with *everlasting* kindness will I have mercy on thee". Then came that last revelation of his glory to all flesh, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ treading the highways and byways of Judea and

preaching, throughout its cities and villages, the good news of the Kingdom of his Father, who then for the first time was revealed to the world as "Our Father."

"What is man that thou art mindful of him" questioned the psalmist thousands of years ago, and the question is as pertinent to-day. No answer can be satisfactory which fails to recognize the fact that two men are involved in the problem; the man of nature and the man of God; the animal man and the man as God intended him to be. One who reasons as if man had a place in nature apart from God can never answer the question. Man cannot separate himself, whatever he may do, from his relation to God. "If I go up into heaven" says the psalmist "thou art there and if I go down into hell thou art there also". This writer, answering his own question, in one place, evidently with the animal man before his mind, says that "he may be compared to the beasts that perish"; but elsewhere, with another man in his thoughts, he answers the question differently: "Thou madest him a little lower than God, that thou mightest crown him with glory."

Man, made of the dust of the earth, but destined to contain within him the Spirit of God, was without doubt created for a purpose, and that not a temporary one, and for every particle of his present excellence there is required of him both "thanks and use". The parable of the talents is no mere story. The man who plants a seed in the ground, however sordid his motive for doing so may be, is carrying out God's purpose that *his* people shall be

fed, and everyone engaged in any useful and honest occupation is similarly employed, whether he knows it or not. More than this, God has made man his fellow-worker in the salvation of man.

Passing at one step, then, from this world to the next, does it not follow, that if God uses the services of the man of Clay to carry on his work here, he will make use of the services of the man of Spirit to carry on the work of his eternal Kingdom? Christianity has taught us but little, if we have not learned that it is more blessed to give than to receive, to serve than to be served, to minister than to be ministered to. What worlds, unknown to us now, may there not be to conquer or to govern hereafter? What occupations to satisfy the most noble ambition? "Know ye not that ye shall judge angels?" says the apostle. "Have thou authority over ten cities" says the returned Lord, and is it likely that He, the Ceaseless Worker, who has ordained us to be kings and priests *for ever*, will permit such high offices to be mere sinecures?

These reflections may not be agreeable to those who think of eternity as a period of perpetual rest and of heaven as a place where there is nothing to do; but those used to active and useful lives here could only regard such conditions with dismay.

Mr. Lecky, in one of his books, quotes an epitaph on a tombstone in a German churchyard:

"I will arise O Christ when Thou callest me; but oh! let me rest awhile for I am very weary."

This desire for rest is no doubt felt by many; but when we wake up in HIS likeness the weariness

ness, which belongs only to the flesh, will have disappeared. When the spirit is relieved of its load of clay and inhabits that body which God shall then have been pleased to give it, the clog which wearies will have been removed forever, we shall, with strength renewed,

“Mount up with wings as eagles,
We shall run and not be weary,
We shall walk and not faint.”

It does not require much philosophy, for those who have led long or trying lives, to lay the burden of their flesh aside saying “Let the end come.” But there is no end. There is an eternity which the just and the unjust alike must face. Who plunges into this abyss with his eyes shut, does so at his peril, but not without warning.

The first truth that a human being should be taught is that he is not a mortal, but an immortal being with a body designed for the habitation of God, and his conduct through life should be governed at all points by this knowledge. “Our *citizenship*” says the Apostle “is in heaven” and until we realize this fact we are certainly a long way from being “fellow-citizens with the *saints* and of the household of God”. Christians, says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, must declare plainly by their actions that they seek a better country than their own, that is, an heavenly. And this country is not to be sought as some countries have been, without chart or competent pilot, for both have been provided.

It is the failure to realize the possibilities of the future which makes the religion of to-day the

superficial thing it is, and "When the Son of Man cometh" he *may* indeed "find faith wanting on the earth!" In place of it, he may find an organization with the name, but without the spirit, of Christianity. He may find people singing hymns expressive of sentiments they feel in no degree and repeating "Amens" without any desire that the petitions to which they assent be fulfilled. The incarnation will be celebrated with feasting and the resurrection by a display of fine raiment, philanthropy, so-called, will abound, and there will be plenty of *rich* churches and eloquent preachers of ethics and abstract problems, but those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" will be those who go empty away. There is a dry rot already sapping the Christian religion. The tenets of Christianity are accepted much as the doctrine of the Solar System is accepted or assent is given to the Law of Gravitation, and they affect people spiritually in about the same degree. Men live preferably in the reflected light of Christianity, when they might enjoy its full blaze. Among the clergy there is a tendency, like that which existed among the heathen priesthood, to profess and follow two religions, an esoteric and an exoteric one: they have one belief for themselves and another which they teach. Their tongues are tied with theological bands which will not allow them to speak freely. Those outside of Christian organizations take refuge in an ignorance which they would be ashamed to own on any other subject, which they call Agnosticism, or they make "lies their refuge". Occidental religion is a long way from where it

should be, after nearly two thousand years of the teaching of Christ, and the hope of progressive Christianity must it would seem, be henceforth in the Orient. When the East and the West shall have met and Christ's religion shall have made the circuit of the earth and returned to that quarter where it had its first beginning and is there established, we may then salute our Lord as *Salvator Mundi*! indeed and realize what that title means.

If men could purchase admission into heaven by the payment of money or by deeds of service, there would possibly be no lack of candidates; but simple faith and love are things too small to enlist devotees. If heaven could be gained by the number of prayers said, no string of beads would be long enough to tell the number men would say; if fastings or flagellations would avail, men would starve or flog themselves to death. Men in all ages, like Naaman, have despised the simple waters at their door and desired to do "some great thing", but no great thing is given them to do. "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord"? they ask.

"Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams
Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?

Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

And the prophet answers:

"He hath shewed thee, O man! what is good;
And what doth the Lord require of thee,
But to do justly, and to love mercy,
And to walk humbly with thy God."

When men came to the Baptist and asked him what

they should *do*, he answered, Your duty always; if you are a tax-collector exact no more than that which is appointed you, if you are a soldier be content with your wages, and to the unofficial people he said, If you have two coats impart to him that hath none; if you have meat to spare do likewise.

But if we think seriously, there is ONE GREAT THING which God does give us to do: He asks us to believe, on no evidence whatever, direct, or by analogy that our senses may perceive, that eternal life is a possession for which it is worth while to suffer ANYTHING and to sacrifice EVERYTHING, and to live accordingly. The gist of true religion is contained in our Lord's speech to the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well: "God is a Spirit and they who worship him must worship him in Spirit and in Truth." No number of prayers, no fastings, philanthropy or works of mercy will weigh in the balance against a real and sincere love of God in the heart. One *heartfelt* prayer will prevail when a million merely *said* will have no effect. Eye service and lip service count for nothing.

"Thou shalt have none other Gods but me" were the words heard on Mount Sinai; "For I the Lord your God am a jealous God". For jealous, let us read zealous. God could not have been jealous, as we understand the word, of the gods of Egypt, for they were no Gods; nor of a thing made in the similitude of a calf which eateth hay, nor of the gods of Greece and Rome, who were often a jest to their own devotees. But he was zealous for the honor due him and that it should not be given to others, and the reason of this is simple.

All spiritual benefits are derived from God alone, and for man to recognize anyone but the True God as the giver of such is to cut himself off from the very spiritual benefits he is seeking which only God can bestow, by reliance on so-called gods who hear not, nor see, nor know.

We offer up our prayers and supplications to God in the name of or "through Jesus Christ our Lord". If we were to be asked why we do this we should most probably say that it is because it is only through the Son that we can have access to the Father; but this is not the full reason: God is not an abstraction, but a Real personality and he desires to be known to his children as he knows *them*. In the days of Judea there were many gods, as there are to-day, and, so that there might be no misunderstanding as to whom they were addressing, the ONE True God was addressed as the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. The prophets of Baal called upon their god, "O Baal, hear us"; and when Elijah's turn came he cried, not to any abstract Being, but to the "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and of Israel". Likewise the Christian, that there may be no misunderstanding, addresses his prayers to the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Be ye holy" saith the Lord. Why? Will our personal holiness save us? No! God gives no such answer. Be ye holy saith the Lord "*for I the Lord your God am holy*". If we desire to spend an Eternity in his presence, is it unreasonable for him to expect from us a bearing fit for such society?

The mission of the Lord Jesus Christ to the Jews was a failure. His mission to the Gentiles is a failure as far as concerns the individual who fails to realize that Jesus Christ is God and a living, reigning King with whom he may be in personal and constant touch. He offered himself to the Jews and the Jews rejected him, to their condemnation. He offers himself to whosoever will accept him, and whosoever rejects him stands in like peril. In the days before the crucifix had usurped the place of the simple cross as the symbol of Christianity, the Saviour's words "Behold I am alive forevermore" had a meaning which is hardly realized in these days. Jesus was not then regarded as a dead *man* with his poor human arms nailed to a dead tree; but a living personality whose loving outstretched arms were both able and willing to embrace all mankind. Such is the Lord Jesus Christ to-day. And man, what of him? Every man born into the *world* is another Adam, of the earth, earthly. Every man born into the *family of God* is a Christ in miniature, with a nature like his, both human and divine.

We have covered much ground in our examination. We have gone over many well beaten paths and pointed out many already very familiar objects but this could not be avoided. We have diverged many times from a direct path, and have sometimes retraced our steps, but we have never lost sight of the main thoroughfare—the Road to Salvation. If anything has been said which challenges

seemingly settled beliefs, at least no FACT of Christianity has been impugned. If stress has been laid on the circumstance that the Mission of the Lord Jesus was primarily to the Jewish nation and that his teaching was altogether addressed to Jewish hearers, and that the work of converting the Gentiles to a knowledge of the True God was delegated to other hands than his own, the Message to humanity at large with which the Lord of Life was charged has not been concealed, nor the superiority of the new covenant to the old lost sight of. The differences our Saviour unmistakably defined, and it would have been strange, indeed, if the founder of a religion had failed to declare its principles and to designate the conditions of membership in it. These were made so plain by the Lord Jesus that it is quite unnecessary to go beyond his own words for a clear exposition of all the *absolute essentials* of the Christian religion which may now be summarized.

In our Lord's time and nation, men lived under the LAW. With this the Gentile world then had no concern whatever. It has never rightly had any concern with it since. The Gentile, after the Jew, was heir to the PROMISE not to the Law. This promise was to Abraham and his seed, Christ. The law, at the best, was but a temporary expedient, added because of transgressions, and its institution, 430 years after the promise, did not make the latter of no effect. The Promise of Christ to the Gentiles was never annulled, and when the time came for them to realize it they succeeded to the Promise with as clear a title as if there had never been the

blot of the Law upon it. The Law is to the Christian as if it had never existed. It has no more *saving power* for him than the precepts of Solomon or the maxims of Confucius. The last dispensation was the gift to man of the Holy Spirit, *the same Spirit that was in Christ*. The two things, heirship to the LAW and heirship to the PROMISE, are utterly irreconcilable. "Moses gave us the Law", says the beloved disciple, "Jesus Christ—grace and truth". It was not a LAW that *he* gave us, but an INSPIRATION. The first missionary to the Gentiles could not understand how his converts in a certain place could think differently, unless they were "bewitched". It should be quite unnecessary, nearly two thousand years afterwards, to lay down this proposition again, but it cannot be disguised that in this day and generation a great many Christians act and think as if the observance of the Decalogue were a determining factor in the Salvation of man.

The mission of the Lord Jesus Christ was to establish an organization which should embrace all mankind, Jew and Gentile alike, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free; circumstances have caused this organization to be called the Christian Church. The entire absence of the Law and the gift of the Holy Spirit in its place are its essential features.

The essentials of *membership* in the organization are:

I. Faith in Jesus Christ as a Divine Personage. Concerning this, the Church's Head has said: "I and my Father are *one*."

"He that hath seen *me* hath seen the Father."

"Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say *well*, for so I am."

"Ye believe in God, believe also in *me*."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am."

"I came down from heaven to do * * the will of him that sent me."

"He that honoreth not the *Son*, honoreth not the Father."

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish."

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on *me* may not abide in darkness."

"Everyone therefore who shall confess *me* before men, him will I also confess before *my* Father which is in heaven."

"He that heareth my word and believeth Him that sent me hath eternal life."



"He that believeth NOT hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

"Whosoever shall DENY me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

"If ye believe NOT that I am he ye shall die in your sins."

II. Baptism in water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, constituting a REGENERATION or NEW BIRTH by which

a covenant relationship is established between God and the individual baptized.

The testimony of our Lord as to this is very clear.

"Go ye," said he to the apostles, "and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."



"Verily, verily, I say unto thee Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

III. The reception under the form of bread and wine of the Body and Blood of Christ, by which the covenant relation established by Baptism is kept alive and the disciple is brought into direct Communion with God.

Our Lord's words hereon are likewise unmistakable.

"I am the living bread which came out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever."

"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."



"Verily, verily, I say unto you Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood ye have no life in you."

There are two questions which the candidate for heaven must answer. The first is: Are you in covenant relationship to Almighty God? And the second is: Are you in direct communion with him? With these answered affirmatively he may have three companions on his journey through life: "The GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the LOVE of God and the FELLOWSHIP of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

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